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**Atlantic Borderland:
Natives, Fishers, Planters and Merchants
in
Notre Dame Bay, 1713-1802**

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Abstract

Atlantic Borderland:

Natives, Fishers, Planters and Merchants in Notre Dame Bay, 1713-1802

Notre Dame Bay in northeastern Newfoundland was a political, socio-economic, and ecological borderland where four economic cultures converged and competed for access to the contested biota of the region. After the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) Newfoundland English entrepreneurs began to move north from the old English Shore into the French migratory fishing territory above Bonavista. Notre Dame Bay was an ecologically and climatically discrete bioregion and was the homeland of the indigenous Beothuk. The Beothuk pursued their economy over the three biogeographic zones of the Bay. They camped at Boyd's Cove in the borderland to be close to European material culture. Incoming English fur trappers, and then salmon and seal fishers, settled in three principal harbours: Twillingate (Toulinguet), Fogo (Fougue) and Tilting. After 1750, aggressive merchants from Poole, Dorset capitalized on wider French losses in the Atlantic world to commence trading into the Bay. The borderland attracted merchants John Slade and Benjamin Lester. They adapted novel business systems for the procurement and shipment of the Bay's salmon, seals, lumber, peltry and other resources, in addition to cod. The borderland, however, was a place of social as well as economic innovation. Permanent settlement by Europeans saw the evolution of a planter group who, with families that included hired servants, acted as the hinge between networked

Atlantic merchants and abundant local commodities. Tilting evolved rapidly into an exclusively Irish and Catholic parish. Conflict erupted after 1763 when French officials orchestrated a final attempt at reclaiming territory in the borderland. By the 1780s, English and Irish planters had successfully crowded out the migratory French. When Benjamin Lester died in 1802, the Beothuk had virtually abandoned the coast for the interior of the island of Newfoundland. With their demise came the end of the Notre Dame Bay borderland event and the incorporation of the region into British imperial systems of administration and commerce.

Abstrait

Région limitrophe de l'Atlantique : autochtones, pêcheurs, habitants-pêcheurs et marchands de la baie de Notre Dame, 1713-1802

La baie de Notre Dame, au nord-est de Terre-Neuve, était une région limitrophe politique, socioéconomique et écologique dans laquelle quatre cultures économiques ont convergé et se sont livrées une compétition pour obtenir l'accès au biote disputé de la région. Après le traité d'Utrecht (1713), les entrepreneurs anglais de Terre-Neuve ont commencé à se déplacer des anciennes côtes anglaises vers les territoires de pêche migratoire français au-dessus de Bonavista. La baie de Notre Dame était une biorégion écologiquement et climatiquement discrète, constituant le foyer des autochtones Béothuks. Les Béothuks ont préservé leur économie dans les trois zones biogéographiques de la baie. Ils ont campé à Boyd's Cove, dans la zone limitrophe proche de la culture européenne. Les chasseurs de fourrure anglais arrivant, puis les pêcheurs de saumon et phoques, se sont établis dans trois ports principaux : Twillingate (Toulinguet), Fogo (Fougue) et Tilting. Après 1750, des marchands agressifs de Poole, Dorset ont profité des grandes pertes françaises dans les régions de l'Atlantique pour commencer leur commerce dans la baie. La région limitrophe a attiré les marchands John Slade et Benjamin Lester. Ils ont adopté des systèmes commerciaux innovants pour l'approvisionnement et l'envoi des saumons, phoques, bois de construction, fourrures et autres ressources de la baie, en plus de la morue. La région limitrophe était cependant un

endroit propice à l'innovation sociale comme économique. Les colonies permanentes des européens ont connu une évolution avec les habitants-pêcheurs qui, avec leurs familles qui comprenaient des domestiques payés, ont joué un rôle charnière entre les réseaux de négociants de l'Atlantique et les marchandises localement abondantes. Tilting a rapidement évolué en une paroisse exclusivement irlandaise et catholique. Le conflit a éclaté après 1763 lorsque les autorités françaises a orchestré une dernière tentative de reconquête du territoire dans la baie. Dans les années 1780, les habitants-pêcheurs anglais et irlandais avaient supplanté les pêcheurs français. A la mort de Benjamin Lester en 1802, les Béothuks avaient pratiquement abandonné la côte pour l'intérieur de l'île de Nouvelle-Terre. Avec leur départ s'acheva l'évènement limitrophe de la baie de Notre Dame et l'incorporation de la région en le système impérial britannique de l'administration et commerce.

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List of Abbreviations

ADA	Archdiocese of Dublin Archives
AMC	Archives de la Marine à Cherbourg (Service Historique de la Défense)
BLHC	Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School
BL	The British Library
BM	The British Museum
BPL	Boston Public Library, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts
CNS	Center for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland
CO	Colonial Office (A document record group in the National Archives of the United Kingdom)
DHC	Dorset History Centre (formerly the Dorset Record Office)
LAC/BAC	Library and Archives Canada / Bibliothèque et Archives Canada
MCM	Médiathèque Charles de la Morandière, Ville de Granville
MHA	Maritime History Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland
MHA/KMNF	Keith Matthews Name Files at the Maritime History Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society
MRQ	Map Room, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland
MUDRB	McGill University, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
MUNFLA	Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive
NAI	National Archives of Ireland

NLI	National Library of Ireland
PANL	Provincial Archives of Newfoundland & Labrador (The Rooms)
PAL	Provincial Archaeology Laboratory, The Rooms, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador
PAO	Provincial Archaeology Office, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador
PRO	Public Record Office (incorporated into The National Archives of the United Kingdom in 2003)
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast
RA	The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle
RDS	Archives of the Royal Dublin Society
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom
WO	War Office (A document record group in the National Archives of the United Kingdom)

Technical Notes

The Borden System is a scheme used by Canadian archaeologists to identify and log excavations through a standardized grid system linked to the National Topographic Series of maps. The system allows for a unified method of cataloguing artifacts from archaeological assemblages. The Borden Number for Inspector Island in Notre Dame Bay, as an example, is DiAq-1. I have chosen to include the Borden Numbers for archaeological sites when they are first mentioned in the text. It is hoped that this will aid a wider readership of archaeologists and ethnohistorians in incorporating the research in this dissertation into their own work. In some cases, defunct archaeological sites do not have an assigned Borden Number, such as the important Beothuk burial site at Seal Cove, near Tilting, discovered by Thomas Farrell in 1877 and described by him that year in the St. John's *Evening Mercury*. As well, I feel that the inclusion of such technical data will communicate to the reader that much of the information we have on the Beothuk is still in the "pure" form of *tentative* archaeological conclusions.

In certain places in this dissertation I have chosen to use traditional Newfoundland terms, as they convey the tone and nuance of certain historical situations better than other usages. Readers are invited to consult Appendix One, "Glossary of Newfoundland English Terms" for definitions.

Latin taxonomic terms are included in parenthesis after the first mention of all animal species, except man (*Homo sapiens*).

Chapter One

Introduction

i. The Notre Dame Bay Borderland

The bioregion of Notre Dame Bay in northern Newfoundland was the final home of the Beothuk until their death as a people in the 1820s. They chose to live there because as hunter-fisher-gatherers they valued the portfolio of resources offered by the environment of the Bay.¹ The region offered them everything they needed to thrive, including elements of European material culture. It was their homeland. For most of the historic period, the Beothuk of Notre Dame Bay were able to practice their economy with a relative lack of interference from the Europeans who began to fish in the region in the sixteenth century. However, the Bay eventually emerged as a location where the English and French Atlantic empires overlapped and where differing economic cultures, including that of the Beothuk, occupied the same disputed land and maritime territory. For a time, it was a place of complex interimperial and intercultural rivalry between French and English empires, and between European and Native worlds. During the eighteenth century, changing diplomatic regimes gave impetus to English commercial expansion in and beyond the Bay, and the French withdrew. The lack of a prevailing political and legal culture proved attractive for English merchants who chose to rapidly settle the region with residents who would work the area for its resources. The English

¹ Notre Dame Bay is defined in this dissertation as the maritime bay of that name, its contiguous landward regions, islands located in the bay, and the watersheds of the Exploits and Gander Rivers. A *bioregion* is an area of the earth defined by its natural characteristics rather than by human structures or borders.

thereby solidified claims to land and sea. With its lack of clear territorial boundaries and wealth of marketable species, Notre Dame Bay emerged as a laboratory of mercantile innovation, and a zone of rapid European community development, at the expense of the original Beothuk residents. It was the very liminality of the region, its status as a diplomatically contested and environmentally bounded border region, which encouraged complex and interlinked processes of accelerated social and economic change. Eventually, as this borderland stabilized, it became a base for onward exploration and commercial expansion to other, newer places of flux, innovation and competition.

Notre Dame Bay and the intercultural conversation that occurred there are not unique. There were other parts of the New World where imperial borders were undefined or were suddenly changed through treaty settlement. These regions provide an important point of examination for historians, since they can emerge as the concluding chapters of longstanding cultural and economic rivalries. Interlinked processes of change can be viewed in sharp relief in borderlands. In borderlands imperial endgames played out and Native cultures came under extreme pressure. These trans-cultural zones were not always places of contention and conflict, but there were inevitable episodes of violence in each instance, and in all cases it was Native peoples who were displaced as European economic and social systems were imposed. The borderlands frame of enquiry was originally applied to the southern United States where Anglo and Spanish cultures met at the U.S-Mexican border. The cultural *métissage* and new forms of economic

communities that emerged in such places have seen the concept of borderlands applied to other parts of North America with intriguing analytical effect.²

ii. Notre Dame Bay in Early Modern Newfoundland

By the end of the seventeenth century, the migratory Newfoundland cod (*Gadus morhua*) fishery that had been pioneered by Portuguese, Breton, Norman and Basque fishers had evolved into a trade practiced primarily by the French and English.³ The variant of dry salted cod production that the English preferred required that they have shore stations, and this fact alone implied future settlement at some stage and in some

² Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron have advocated the use of the borderlands approach; see Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814-841. See also the subsequent responses to Adelman and Aron in *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (October 1999) as follows: Evan Haefeli, "A Note on the Use of North American Borderlands," 1222-25; Christopher Ebert Schmidt-Nowara, "Borders and Borderlands of Interpretation," 1226-28; John R. Wunder and Pekka Hämäläinen, "Of Lethal Places and Lethal Essays," 1229-34. See also Adelman and Aron's reply to the foregoing: "Of Lively Exchanges and Larger Perspectives," 1235-39. For an introduction to the concept of borderlands, see Daniel H. Usner, "Borderlands" in *A Companion to Colonial America*, ed. Daniel Vickers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 408-24. Alan Taylor has recently used the borderland concept to good effect in his study of Thayendenegea (Joseph Brant). See Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and The Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006). On the importance of considering Native conceptions of borders and sovereignty, see the recent Juliana Barr, "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the 'Borderlands' of the early Southwest," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser., 68, no. 1 (January 2011): 5-46.

³ Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). On the Portuguese at Newfoundland, see Darlene Abreu-Ferreira, "Portugal's Cod Fishery in the 16th Century: Myths and Misconceptions" in *How Deep is the Ocean? Historical Essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery*, ed. James E. Candow and Carol Corbin (Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1997), 31-44; Abreu-Ferreira, "The Cod Trade in Early-Modern Portugal: Deregulation, English Domination, and the Decline of Female Cod Merchants," (PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1995).

form. English merchants' and fishing masters' attitudes to settlement went through three distinct but overlapping stages: initially they opposed settlement, but soon found that it made sense to reserve the best rooms in familiar harbours by leaving over-wintering servants. The final, eighteenth-century stage saw this growing population of now-resident over-wintering English and Irish planters and servants as a captive market for fishing gear, household goods, and foodstuffs. Merchants could thus withdraw and concentrate on transportation and financing, rather than the messy business of managing fishing and lumbering crews. Distinct from this three-stage progression, there were cases of proprietary colonies and plantations that, while exceptions to the general progression of Newfoundland's early-modern settlement history, nonetheless stand as salient examples of a sophisticated trading gentry operating fishing enterprises in this unlikely corner of the Atlantic world.⁴

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the artisanal and vernacular French Newfoundland fishery evolved from an enterprise prosecuted in smaller boats to a more professional industry carried in larger ships.⁵ Beginning in the 1680s, the *Ministère de la Marine* came to value the Newfoundland and Icelandic fisheries for their capacity to develop a population of seaworthy young men for the navy, in the same way that English administrators had. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the English

⁴ See Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 122-160.

⁵ On vernacular and directed industries, see Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 29-32. On the early long-distance French fisheries see Laurier Turgeon, "Le temps des pêches lointaines : permanences et transformations (vers 1500 - vers 1850)" in *Histoire des pêches maritimes en France* ed. Michel Mollat (Paris: Bibliothèque Historique Privat, 1987): 133-181; Pope, "The 16th-century Fishing Voyage" in Candow and Corbin, *How Deep is the Ocean?*, 15-30.

established themselves on the English Shore between Bonavista and the southern tip of the Avalon Peninsula, the French developed resident fisheries at St. Pierre and around Plaisance, with a migratory inshore practice in the north of Newfoundland that stretched northward from Bonavista and then down the west coast of the island. *Armateurs* from ports such as Saint Mâlo, Granville, Fécamp and Saint Brieuc developed a seasonal, migratory fishery that was more formalized than the English migratory/resident practice. Various official *ordonnances*, promulgated from the earliest days of the French trade, dictated such things as the minimum age of ships' boys or the requirement that a surgeon be added to the crew of larger ships; the West Country English fishery was somewhat of a mercantile free-for-all compared to the French version.

The 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, which ended the 1702-1713 War of the Spanish Succession, was a historically important but practically imperfect vehicle that granted control of Newfoundland to Britain while allowing for a French summer fishery in some parts of the island. The French would not be allowed to build permanent settlements, only those temporary stations necessary for the processing of fish.⁶ A nascent British system of colonial administration was tested after Utrecht at Newfoundland and in other parts of the burgeoning Anglo-Atlantic. The system seemed unsuited to the particular

⁶ Jean-François Brière, "Pêche et politique à Terre-Neuve au XVIII^e siècle: la France véritable gagnante du traité d'Utrecht?" *Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 2 (1983): 168-187; James K. Hiller, "Utrecht Revisited: The Origins of French Fishing Rights in Newfoundland Waters," *Newfoundland Studies* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 23-39; Hiller, "Le French Shore et les traités franco-anglais," *Annales du Patrimoine de Fécamp* 10 (2003): 19-21; Olaf U. Janzen, "The French Shore Dispute" in *Newfoundland and the Entente Cordiale, 1904-2004: Proceedings of a Symposium held in St. John's and Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador, 16-20 September 2004*, ed. James K. Hiller and Christopher J.B. English (St. John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2007), 44-55.

place that Newfoundland occupied in the new imperial network, and officials subsequently struggled to address Newfoundland's unique place. Newfoundland was a strange combination of fishery and military-naval station. It was neither a potential agricultural centre nor a venue for directed emigration, as the American colonies were. Despite its difficult climate and unsure status, however, Newfoundland provided certain benefits, such as a consistent supply of trained seamen, a lucrative fishing and supply economy, and a visible naval presence at St. John's. Newfoundland thus served a purpose in the Anglo-Atlantic economic system that differed from that of other colonies and holdings. Additionally, Newfoundland was important simply because the French wanted it. By the end of the seventeenth century, curbing French expansionism was in itself reason to devote resources to protecting the Newfoundland fishing fleets and resident agents, merchants, and planters.

Within the commercial and strategic Newfoundland space there were various contested marchlands and areas that were coveted by expansionist West Country English merchants for the resource potential promised therein, but which were either unexplored or in the hands of others. The south coast, much of the interior, Labrador, and that part of the French Shore that contained Notre Dame Bay were all areas that attracted official British interest. The ancient dried-cod and wine trade triangle was lucrative enough, but other parts of the island, especially to the northward and beyond to Labrador, offered the promise of other commodities.⁷ Salmon (*Salmon salar*), lumber, seals (various species),

⁷ On the triangular Atlantic trade, see Rosemary Ommer, *From Outpost to Outport: A Structural Analysis of the Jersey-Gaspé Cod Fishery, 1767-1886* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

and furs were the principal early attractions of the northern region, but it was hoped that other riches lay to the north of Bonavista. There were challenges to be met, however. In Notre Dame Bay there lived a robust local population of Beothuk Natives whose economic and spiritual belief system required that they retain access to the coast. There was also a determined and long-standing French seasonal presence in the area. After 1713, the French withdrew from the area, but some decades later, after wider Atlantic losses following the Seven Years' War, sought to enforce their claims to the region under the Utrecht treaty.

In addition to being a human borderland between European fisheries, Notre Dame Bay also represented a distinct boreal seacoast bioregion, a discreet zone which was defined by the characteristics of its natural environment (see Figure 1.1). Largely because of those natural properties, the entire bioregion represented the heartland of the indigenous hunter-fisher-gatherer Beothuk people. The spatial limits of the Notre Dame Bay bioregion correspond to the core of the eighteenth-century Beothuk world. Though they occasionally expanded their range beyond this region, they mostly practiced a flexible annual cycle of limited, band-level migrations within it, taking advantage of the appearance of marine and terrestrial species. They retreated to the interior each winter where disparate bands gathered and engaged in a social season of cultural affirmation, like other boreal Native peoples.⁸ Notre Dame Bay amounted to the economic core of the

⁸ Bruce Trigger characterized northern winters as a time of "intense group activity." See Bruce Trigger, *The Impact of Europeans on Huronia* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969), v.

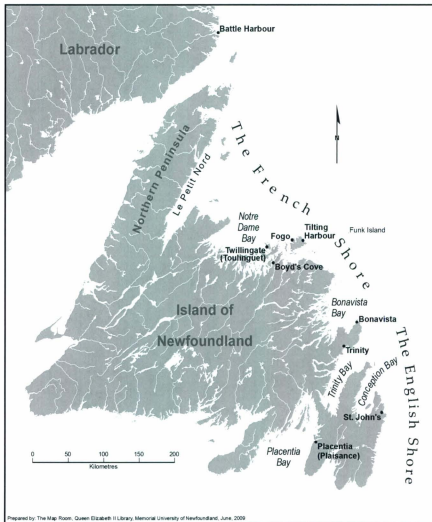


Figure 1.1 Newfoundland c1755 with Notre Dame Bay settlements

Beothuk world in the period under consideration here. Their territory ranged from the outermost islands of the Bay, far out to sea, through the inner coastal region with its maze of islands and inlets, to their winter home at Red Indian Lake in the interior at the headwaters of the Exploits River. The very place that the Beothuk had chosen as their home territory, with its sheltering islands, corridors to the interior and distinct species availability emerged as a commercial and diplomatic battleground between the English and French during the eighteenth century. A deliberate use of the borderlands style of historical enquiry, a perspective which explicitly stresses the environmental particularity of this region and its status as a Native homeland, can place the decisive English-French conflict of the eighteenth century in clear focus. The contours of change that reshaped the Bay from a Native homeland to a secure corner of the English Atlantic can thereby be fully exposed and analyzed. In some ways Notre Dame Bay resembled Planter Nova Scotia, where complex historical processes are best viewed as having unfolded within the context of a "historiographical triumvirate" of colonial settlement, imperial rivalry and aboriginal history.⁹ Unlike the Natives in the Maritime colonies that John Reid has researched, however, the Newfoundland Beothuk could not appeal to treaty arrangements in order to mitigate the profound disruptions that resulted from the imposition of European systems of government and economy.¹⁰

⁹ John G. Reid, "Pax Britannica or Pax Indigena? Planter Nova Scotia (1760-1782) and Competing Strategies of Pacification," *The Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (December 2004): 669-692.

¹⁰ John G. Reid, "Empire, the Maritime Colonies, and the Supplanting of Mi'kma'ki/Wulstukwik, 1780-1820," *Acadiensis* 38, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2009): 78-97.

iii. Notre Dame Bay as a Historical Borderland

A number of linked processes unfolded in northeastern Newfoundland in the eighteenth century. The story ended in the early 1800s with the completion of the region's transformation into a place where British institutions and systems of administration dominated civil and commercial arrangements. The French had moved elsewhere, as the commercial style of their fishery proved unequal to the aggressive territorial English system, which by the late eighteenth century revolved around the encouragement by West Country English merchants of year-round settlement. The Beothuk as a people were also gone by the early decades of the 1800s, their economy overwhelmed to finality by the British advance. Also by the first years of the nineteenth century the large numbers of Irish who had been conducted to the borderland by the English merchant Benjamin Lester were thoroughly co-opted into, or rather returned to, British colonial control. Like the Beothuk for a time, the Irish had used the diplomatically ambiguous borderland as a place to access the Anglo-Atlantic and its benefits without the restrictions that they experienced elsewhere. The Irish affinity for the few remaining French who fished the area had been a source of concern for English merchants and administrative officials, and likely added a sense of urgency to the British mercantile project in the region. The borderland was thus a series of processes in time, an *event*, as well as a place which was environmentally bounded and spatially defined by the Beothuk. The event ended when the physical spaces and competing systems of economy and culture of the region were all subsumed into the British Empire. The markers of its conclusion were the death of the Beothuk, the departure of the French, and

the absorption of the Irish into prevailing British colonial norms of culture and commerce.

There are three elements to the borderland concept that are exemplified by Notre Dame Bay in the eighteenth century: liminality, accelerated change, and environmental boundedness.

a. Liminality

A borderland was a liminal place where competing European ideas of territory and ownership collided and were left unresolved for a period of time. As long as one European party believed that its interpretation of the legalities of ownership was getting short shrift, the borderland retained its status as contested territory. An area is rendered a borderland through its status of having been at the edge of, or between, imperial territories in combination with having had resident Native peoples who had their own valid territorial claims. Maps from the periods under study often show how different nations conceived of their sovereign rights over liminal regions. The origins of imperial claims in the early modern period can be complex, however. Differing European conceptions of sovereignty, and how it was established, caused ongoing disputes. Territory which often amounted to mere “corridors and enclaves” could change hands through warfare and conquest, treaty settlement, or outright purchase.¹¹ A borderland also has a meaning beyond the strictly legal or diplomatic. A borderland is characterized

¹¹ Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires: 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10-23; Cf. Ken MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World: The Legal Foundations of Empire, 1576-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

as such because of how the people at the time conceived of it, as revealed in historical sources. Documents can reveal a sense of uncertainty or confusion about where territorial lines were located. Again, maps are a key source in this regard.

A borderland is defined by the presence of one or more groups of indigenous peoples. In all cases, preexisting claims to ownership by indigenous Amerindians were ignored by incoming Europeans, and for their part Natives either ignored European imperial boundaries or used them for strategic Native gain. They often migrated in and out of given bioregions over time, practicing economic systems that demanded flexibility and adaptation. Indigenous people must be incorporated into the narrative of borderlands without ghettoizing and thus dehumanizing them. They were actors, often decisive, in early modern events. Importantly, the fact that the imperial boundaries that Europeans imposed on Native territory were often amorphous and arbitrary require that the definition of borderland used to analyze a region like Notre Dame Bay be flexible. The wide and ill-defined boundary region between French and English fisheries may have constituted, to the Europeans, a territorial limit, but the meaning it had to the Beothuk was quite different. The Beothuk likely did not see the borderland as being between any other entities; its liminality was purely a European construct.

Finally, the liminality of a borderland had a temporal sense. Borderlands should be viewed as transitional events, rather than just geographic spaces. A borderland had beginning and end points in time, though these are not always measurable with precision. The borderland event can be pinpointed to a known historical incident such as the propagation of a treaty or the death of a pioneering merchant. In this respect we begin to

see the borderland as a combination of events and conditions, as a dynamic occurrence in time where even apparently unchanging environmental conditions are seen to evolve through long term climatic cycles or the appearance and disappearance of Native inhabitants.

b. Accelerated Change

Borderlands were places of rapid change, often resulting from sudden legal or diplomatic fiat. As such, they were sites of accelerated cultural and economic experimentation and innovation. Communities developed or could be abandoned quickly. Native peoples adopted aspects of European material culture, and as European culture in general proved unequal to the task of colonization in the New World, Europeans borrowed heavily from the Native cultures that surrounded them. Just as indigenous peoples were forced to, or chose to, change much of their economy in the face of European challenges and opportunities, so were Europeans compelled to adapt in the face of new environmental realities. Borderlands thus appear at times to be laboratories of material and cultural as well as mercantile experimentation. Ironically, due to both their politically and economically unsettled nature and the related absence of hegemonic pressures, borderlands were also zones where some human groups were able to access the Atlantic economy while retaining a measure of cultural distinctiveness. This was the experience of the Notre Dame Bay Beothuk.

c. Environmental Boundedness

A final way of defining a historical borderland is by highlighting its ecological character. In many cases it was natural barriers that dictated the limits of European

territorial claims: a river valley, an island chain, a mountain range or a peninsula. Many borderlands can thus be seen as bounded regions of the earth's surface, defined under rubrics provided by the environmental sciences, in addition to having been sites of human enterprise and conflict. A borderland can have a definable micro-climate, for example, and this leads to the establishment of particular species of plants and animals.

Environmental conditions provided the raw materials for the institution of economic systems by indigenous inhabitants, which is why the boundaries of given borderlands were in many cases defined for the Natives by environmental factors. Native peoples tended to move easily between land and water, a fact which enhances the value of viewing borderlands in terms of bioregions, which can take in both land and sea.

The aggregation of the experience of indigenous peoples into the borderland narrative forces the historical analyst to consider environmental factors at a detailed level. In their closeness to land, river and sea, they must be seen as part of the biomass of the region in question. Natives chose to live in given areas, or colonize others, based on the availability of resources and the interlinked environmental web of climate, biota and geography/hydrography. Though often difficult to fully assess, there may also be a spiritual component to Native territorial choice.

iv. The Ethnohistory of the Borderland Beothuk

The human world that existed in Notre Dame Bay long before the first Europeans arrived, and the corresponding bioregion in which this world thrived, forms the central point of reference for this dissertation. The Beothuk were a northeastern Native group who spoke a variant of the Algonquian tongue of North America, and who had evolved a

complex cyclical, seasonal resource extraction and ceremonial routine which encompassed the interior of the island as well as the inner and outer coastal areas. Though often thought of as a woodland people, they showed more facility for surviving in river estuaries, seacoasts and large-lakeside locations. The two great rivers of the region, the Exploits and the Gander, played a central role in the Beothuk economy, but they also had an archipelagic character, and were at their most confident when they were moving through and around ocean islandscapes. There is also an important sense in which the Beothuk world itself was characterized by ecological and, it might be proposed, mental frontiers. Hunting and gathering tasks necessarily differed on either side of the borderland between ocean and forest. The trip from forest to coast, however, also approached the frontier between the spirit world and the world of the living, as indicated by the Beothuk practice of always burying their dead near the shore. From the time of the first migratory French arrivals in the early 16th century, the Beothuk likely pondered on the nature of this place as a liminal zone that separated their universe from that of the foreign arrivals..

Historical writing on the topic of the Beothuk has often been coloured by motifs of extinction, tragedy and violence.¹² The Beothuk have thus been partially ghettoized through an extensive victimology as strangely unable to adapt to the sudden presence of Europeans in their midst, fatally disinterested in European modes of trade or commerce,

¹² For example, see Barbara Whitby, *The Last of the Beothuk: A Canadian Tragedy* (Canmore, AB: Altitude Publishing, 2005); Frederick William Rowe, *Extinction! The Beothuks of Newfoundland* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1986).

and capriciously violent, especially when their salmon rivers were threatened.¹³ Little of the historical writing on the Beothuk has been in conversation with a wider ethnohistorical literature. Ingeborg Marshall's large *A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk*, the only attempt at a serious academic monograph on the group, should be viewed essentially as an impressive compendium of Beothuk contact reports and archaeological data, rather than a work of analytical ethnohistory.¹⁴ Marshall sees the Beothuk as a unique and doomed group who stand apart, culturally as well as geographically, from the rest of the Native groups in the northeast woodlands. Yet as early as 1922, Frank Speck was able to conclude that the Beothuk "formed an archaic member of the culture group which embraced the Micmac and other northeastern Algonkians."¹⁵ It is this sense of a Beothuk connectedness with a wider population of indigenous peoples that is lacking in Marshall's work and most other casual writing on

¹³ Daniel Richter has argued for an end to the emphasis on shared catastrophes that colours so much American Indian history. See Richter, "Whose Indian History?" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 50, no. 2 (April 1993): 392.

¹⁴ Ingeborg Marshall, *The History and Ethnography of the Beothuk* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ It would be best to remove the Beothucks' extinction from its current centrality in most Newfoundland writing on the group. Daniel Richter offers a promising model, whereby Iroquois responses to European invasions are presented as "the creative adaptation to a series of cultural ordeals." See Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 2; Frank Speck, *Beothuk and Micmac* (1922; repr. New York, AMS Press, 1981), 69-70. A recent analysis of DNA from Beothuk remains has bolstered Speck's conclusions. See Melanie Kuch *et al.*, "A Preliminary Analysis of the DNA and Diet of the Extinct Beothuk: A Systematic Approach to Ancient Human DNA," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 132, no. 4 (April 2007): 594-604.

Newfoundland history which invariably feature a cameo appearance by the ill-starred Beothuk.¹⁶

Standing apart from this limited tradition is a small body of archaeological writing which optimistically seeks to place the Beothuk in a wider context. M.A.P. Renouf has argued that, in light of the prehistoric record and the succession of peoples who predated them at Newfoundland, the Beothuk should be assessed in a regional sense with special attention to their connections to Labrador. Archaeologist Donald Holly has similarly pointed out the importance of the proximity of Labrador and the questions this raises about cultural and trade connections between the Beothuk and Innu and Inuit groups resident there.¹⁷ Holly's writing echoes the seminal work of Ralph Pastore in seeking to highlight Beothuk agency and adaptation to change in their environment. Challenged by the sudden presence of Europeans, the Beothuk tested a succession of strategies and may have focused more intently on their identity in the face of the European "Other."¹⁸

¹⁶ Marshall's monograph on the Beothuk might be characterized as an example of what Daniel Richter has referred to as "the cameo fallacy" in the writing of Native history, whereby a white, European master narrative is presented with cameo appearances by "others." See Daniel Richter, "Whose Indian History?" 381, 389. For examples of the cameo approach in the popular historiography of Newfoundland, see Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland, A History to 1843* (St. John's, NL: Long Beach Press, 1999), 20; Kevin Major, *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto: Penguin, 2001), 145; Frederick W. Rowe, *A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), 172.

¹⁷ M.A.P. Renouf, "Prehistory of Newfoundland Hunter Gatherers: Extinctions or Adaptations?" *World Archaeology* 30, no. 3 (1999): 403-420; Donald Holly, "A Historiography of an Ahistoricity: On the Beothuk Indians," *History and Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (2003): 127-140; James Tuck and Ralph Pastore, "A Nice Place to Visit... Prehistoric Human Extinctions on the Island of Newfoundland," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 9, no. 1 (1985): 69-80.

¹⁸ For example, Holly has proposed that the annual recourse to the interior may also have facilitated spiritual activity and feasts. See Donald Holly, "Environment, History and

Holly's work is reminiscent of the writings of Bruce Trigger, who chose to emphasize Native agency and rationalism, and advocated for the avoidance of stereotypes.¹⁹ Trigger's overall revisionist philosophy holds great promise for the study of the Beothuk. For example, on the subject of cultural borrowing by Native peoples, Trigger wrote that the adoption of new cultural practices might depend in part on the homogeneity of the group in question.²⁰ Thus the Beothuks' apparent lack of interest in formal trading with Europeans might be interpreted as a signpost of a strong internal cultural commitment. The main methodological conclusion from Trigger's pioneering work on the Huron was that a dynamic web of European and Native interest groups, with varying goals and mandates, governed the progress of Huron-European history. He privileged a view of Native people that allowed for rich cultural responses and materialist calculations.²¹ In general, Trigger's advocacy of an approach to Native history that downplays romantic, cultural explanations for Native responses to contact with the expanding European

Agency in Storage Adaptation: On the Beothuk in the 18th Century," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 22, no. 1 (1998): 19-30; Holly, "The Beothuk on the Eve of their Extinction," *Arctic Anthropology* 37, no. 1 (2000): 79-95; Holly, "The Place of 'Others' in Hunter-Gatherer Intensification," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 2 (June 2005): 207-220.

¹⁹ Bruce G. Trigger, "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian," *American Antiquity* 45, no. 4 (1980): 662-676; Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (1976; repr. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), xxvii; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

²⁰ Bruce G. Trigger, "Cultural Unity and Diversity" in *Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger *et al.*, vol. 15 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: The Smithsonian Institution, 1978): 799-804.

²¹ Bruce G. Trigger, "Retrospection," in *The Archaeology of Bruce Trigger: Theoretical Empiricism*, eds. Ronald F. Williamson and Michael S. Bisson (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 225-257. See also Trigger, "Early Iroquoian Contact with Europeans" in *Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger *et al.*, vol. 15 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, 344-356.

economy and emphasizes instead the human capacity for economic and political calculation could help place the Beothuk in a more holistic and progressive light, if applied to them.²² Trigger's theory that "...Huron culture flourished as a result of European contact so long as the Huron people were not dominated by Europeans..." has an echo in the seminal work of Ralph Pastore. In a series of important articles on the Beothuk, historian and archaeologist Pastore advanced several formative theories that have greatly aided in the establishment of an understanding of the basis of the Beothuk economic and spiritual system and the reasons for their demise. His excellent book on the Beothuk clearly outlines in popular prose the reasons for their extinction.²³ By choosing to withdraw and avoid formal economic relations with the Europeans the Beothuk doomed themselves because there was no outside group or party for whom their continued existence was important.²⁴ Much of Pastore's analysis is directed toward the Beothuk practice of "pilfering" iron goods from European fishing stations. It is likely the Beothuk viewed these activities as integral to their hunter-fisher-gatherer economy and suffered little or no guilt at what Europeans, then and apparently now, saw as an unethical or illegal activity. In assessing the place of similar activities by Indians in the lower Mississippi valley, for example, Daniel Usner has chosen to characterize such harvesting activities as "informal episodes of exchange" and argues that they represent

²² Bruce G. Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations," *Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (March 1991): 1195-1215.

²³ Ralph Pastore, *Shanawdithit's People: The Archaeology of the Beothuks* (St. John's, NL: Atlantic Archaeology, 1992).

²⁴ Ralph Pastore, "Fishermen, Furriers and Beothuks: The Economy of Extinction," *Man in the Northeast* 33 (Spring 1987): 47-62; Pastore, "The Collapse of the Beothuk World," *Acadiensis* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 52-71.

one of a multiplicity of relationships "that American Indians formed as participants within dynamic frontier economies."²⁵

In one of his final papers Pastore clearly rejected the traditional doom-and-gloom narrative that surrounds writing on the Beothuk, and he advanced the exciting theory of a Beothuk "florescence" resulting from the presence of Europeans in their midst. Pastore postulated that the proximity of Europeans and the material culture of the fishery allowed the Beothuk to live more efficiently and to make the transition from a stone age to an iron age people. According to this thesis, Beothuk agency was expressed in the choice to scavenge iron and nails from their seasonally abandoned fishing stations, which they fashioned into hunting points, thereby increasing their success rate as hunters. The overall result was a period of cultural and economic advancement for the Beothuk, a period of florescence which might have also given them more time to pursue cultural and religious activities.²⁶ It is during the borderland period described in this dissertation that the Beothuk accessed the European world on their own terms and in their own way. When the unsettled borderland nature of the place was resolved, however, the Beothuk

²⁵ Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 191.

²⁶ Ralph Pastore, "The Beothuk Florescence: Newfoundland's Aboriginal People in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," (paper presented at the 1992 Atlantic Studies Conference, Halifax, 1992). Donald Holly has adopted this thesis. See Holly, "Environment, History and Agency," 24-5. Pastore's idea that access to European metal made the lives of the Beothuk easier was predicated by at least one anthropological study. See: Françoise Raynauld "Les Pêcheurs et les Colons Anglais n'ont pas Exterminé les Beothuks de Terre-Neuve," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 14, no. 1 (1984): 45-59.

lost the set of choices they had previously enjoyed. The end of the borderland was the end of the Beothuk.

v. Summary

The Beothuk defined the Notre Dame Bay borderland for us. They chose it as their home because it was an ecologically bounded bioregion which offered a host of good hunting, fishing and gathering opportunities. For a time, the Beothuk presence there kept French and English fishers from making the Bay central to their economic activities at Newfoundland, though the French had a longstanding seasonal presence in the better harbours and coves. However, the very environmental qualities of the Bay that attracted the Beothuk, such as sea ice as a vector for harp seals (*Phoca groenlandica*) each spring, or the numerous islands dotting the mouths of the Gander and Exploits salmon rivers, discouraged European navigators. When pressures on the old English Shore reached a critical point around the year 1700, English families pushed into Notre Dame Bay, closely followed by opportunistic merchants, for whom seals, salmon, and other commodities now appeared as valuable adjuncts to the old cod trade. The Treaty of Utrecht gave the English the excuse they needed to claim the area as their own. The French withdrew shortly thereafter, but made one final attempt at reclaiming their old fishing rooms fifty years later, when the major losses of the Seven Years' War suddenly made their prior fishing experience in the borderland look very valuable.

Is it helpful to understand a given time and place with reference to its distinct environmental characteristics? What are the special conditions that arise in contested intercultural zones and how do these impact the progress of incoming societies and the

erasure of existing Native cultures? And, by explicitly referencing the liminality of this region, can historians come closer to understanding the complex processes of mercantile innovation and social change that occurred there? The goal of the present work is to test the efficacy of the borderlands approach in helping us to understand the interactions of culture and environment in this particular corner of the Atlantic world.

Chapter Two

The Beothuk Environment of Notre Dame Bay

i. An Archipelagic People

The Beothuk were an archipelagic people. They understood the ecology and hydrography of islands and how the cyclical movement of the tides affected the availability of marine species. They appreciated the sheltering and protective character of islands, their special nature as liminal outposts of both the human and spirit worlds, and their changing seasonal character, especially as they became linked landscapes in the winter when the runs and channels iced over. The Beothuk were adapted to using islands in their economy in ways the Europeans initially struggled with. European watercraft were not suited to navigating the tight spaces and sharp turns in Notre Dame Bay. Though their hunter-fisher-gatherer economy allowed for territorial adjustment, including permanent relocation to the interior in the final time of stress, the Beothuk could not suffer from curtailed access to the inner or outer coast for long periods of time without suffering considerable economic distress.¹ They favoured a cyclical resource-extraction regime which centered on seals (several species), salmon, seabirds (various species) and, when pressed, caribou (*Rangifer caribou*). They preferred to bury their dead on the outer

¹ This dissertation will use the term *hunter-fisher-gatherer* to describe the Beothuk, since a large percentage of their foraging activity, both in terms of time devoted and volumes procured, was expended on marine resources. The term *hunter-gather* will be used when referring in general to the mode of production characterized by foraging, and to the peoples who practice(d) it.

edge of the inner coastal zone, as this area represented for them the outer limits of the human world.²

ii. The Beothuk as Adaptive Hunter-Fisher-Gatherers

The hunter-gatherer mode of production is characterized by subsistence foraging for food and other resources. This definition views hunter-gatherers primarily in ecological terms. Egalitarianism, a lack of interest in material accumulation, and residential mobility are also some of the noteworthy features of these diverse societies.³ In the Newfoundland context, Renouf has stressed the innovative nature of hunter-gatherer society and its adaptability to long-term environmental challenges, such as uncertainty in resource availability, through such vehicles as band-based enterprise with annual group-wide band gatherings. Food storage technologies are another way hunter-gatherers deal with uncertainty.⁴ Renouf also highlights the importance of spirituality

² In 1915, James Howley published a compendium of primary sources (reports, interviews, testimonies, and accounts) related to the Beothuk. It remains a key contribution, and should be viewed as a primary source. See James P. Howley, *The Beothuks or Red Indians: The Aboriginal Inhabitants of Newfoundland* (1915; repr. Toronto: Prospero Books, 2000); Ralph Pastore, "Fishermen, Furriers and Beothuks: The Economy of Extinction," *Man in the Northeast* 33 (Spring 1987): 47-62. Ingeborg Marshall's large and detailed work on the Beothuk is an important point of reference for those seeking a survey of Beothuk ethnography: see Ingeborg Marshall, *A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

³ Bruce Winterhalder, "The behavioural ecology of hunter-gatherers," in *Hunter-Gatherers: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Catherine Panter-Brick, Robert H. Layton and Peter Rowley-Conwy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12-13, 34.

⁴ M.A.P. Renouf, *Ancient Cultures, Bountiful Seas: The Story of Port-Aux-Choix* (St. John's, NL: Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1999), 17. Holly has also highlighted the importance of storage technologies to the Beothuk hunter-fisher-gatherer economy, see Donald Holly, "Environment, History and Agency in Storage

and ritual as being integral to the process of resource harvesting.⁵ The Newfoundland Beothuk should be viewed as typical subarctic hunter-gatherers, regardless of a considerable historiography which has sought to portray them as a doomed, archaic anomaly among northeastern Native groups.⁶ This unfortunate ghettoization of the Beothuk in terms of their tragic end is essentially a holdover from the days of the great Victorian historian of Newfoundland D. W. Prowse.⁷ The Beothuk apparently operated on an egalitarian basis with a clear division of labour between male and female economic roles. They were creative in their adaptations to environmental challenges, especially as their access to the inner and outer coastal regions was curtailed during the historic period, and they were possessed of a strong spirituality. Each of these characteristics of hunter-gatherer societies will be looked at in some detail.

Adaptation: On the Beothuk in the 18th Century," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 22, no. 1 (1998): 19-30. For another perspective on the discussion of storage as an adaptive strategy by the Beothuk and other eastern subarctic groups, see Marianne P. Stopp, "Ethnohistoric Analogues for Storage as an Adaptive Strategy in Northeastern Subarctic Prehistory," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 21, no. 3 (September 2002): 301-328.

⁵ M.A.P. Renouf, "Phillip's Garden West: A Newfoundland Groswater Variant," in *Contributions to the Study of the Dorset Palaeo-Eskimos*, ed. Patricia D. Sutherland (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2005), 73-76; *Ancient Cultures*, 17-18.

⁶ Donald Holly has commented on the fact of the Beothuk extinction having become the entire story of this people; see Holly, "The Beothuk on the Eve of their Extinction": 79-95. See also Donald H. Holly, "A Historiography of an Ahistoricity: On the Beothuk Indians," *History and Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (2003): 127-140. As early as 1922, Frank Speck warned that the Beothuk should not be viewed solely in terms of their extinction; see Frank G. Speck, *Beothuk and Micmac*. (1922; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1981), 12-13.

⁷ In addition to a preoccupation with the manner of their demise, Prowse, like other historians before and after him, was keen to portray the Beothuk as bloodthirsty savages. In 1895 he wrote of the Beothuk "Every other motive in them seems to have been overpowered by their instinct to kill the white man." See D. W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland* (1895; repr. Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, NL: Boulder Publications, 2002), 385.

Beothuk society appeared to be egalitarian, without elites or a hierarchy of power. As with most hunter-gatherer groups, and indeed all forms of human society, there were likely specialists of both sexes whose particular skills and talents were appreciated.⁸ Indeed, one of the survival adaptations of hunter-gatherers is a flat social structure where all activities, and the resultant resources, are shared equally, with a minimum of internal rivalry. Tradition holds that the murdered husband of Shanawdithit, the last Beothuk, was a chief, but this is misplaced terminology. He may have been a senior band member, but we do not know enough about the Beothuk to say any more than that.

Reports from observers of the Beothuk in the historical period point to only scant amounts of material accumulation beyond that necessary for food foraging, hunting and fishing. Even the tiny arrowheads found at the important Boyd's Cove archaeological site (Canadian Borden number DiAp-3), which Pastore postulated could be children's toys, can be interpreted as an educational tool designed to ensure that upcoming generations would be able to contribute to the band economy, rather than as items for the sheer enjoyment or entertainment of the children.⁹ In fact, they could have been both. Rituals related to the acquisition or distribution of large amounts of material items, often conducted to incur or repay obligations, such as the potlatch ceremonies of the Pacific Northwest, does not appear to have existed among the Beothuk.

Prior to being challenged by the arrival of Europeans, the Beothuk borderland economy was structured around the seasonal exploitation of a wide range of mostly

⁸ Renouf, *Ancient Cultures*, 17.

⁹ Ralph Pastore, "Beothuk Micropoints: Are they Children's Toys?" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Archaeological Association, Halifax, 1996), 1-5.

animal land and sea resources around Newfoundland. The Beothuk broke into bands in the spring and traveled to different locations in order to more efficiently harvest marine resources at the inner and outer coast. In the prehistoric period they may have had winter camps in the sheltered inner coastal area, but the arrival of Europeans precipitated the adaptive response of deep-interior group winter campsites at the head of the Exploits River, at Red Indian Lake.

Though band-based foraging is a feature of hunter-gatherer populations, they also tend to evolve a social and economic adjunct in the form of annual gatherings where cultural affirmation and information sharing are enacted.¹⁰ This exemplifies the form of cultural affirmation that was practiced during these winter congresses, where a group-wide identity was reinforced among disparate bands that spent much of the year living at, or traveling to and from, widely distributed inner coastal camps.

Anthropologists posit two positions in explaining the storage of food surpluses: one approach views storage as a social activity and the other view sees it in economic terms, principally as an adaptation meant to deal with uncertainty in resource availability. Renouf has argued that hunter-gatherers at Newfoundland, the Beothuk as well as their predecessors, used a variety of innovative "risk-reducing mechanisms" to deal with uncertainty in the availability of resources, including food storage.¹¹ The Beothuk possessed advanced technologies for the storage of fish and meat products, as well as

¹⁰ Holly has commented on the general context of identity formation as a coping strategy by the Beothuk toward the end of the historic period; see Holly, "The Beothuk on the Eve of their Extinction," 89-90; Renouf, *Ancient Cultures*, 17-18. Marshall, *The Beothuk*, 381, 385; Speck, *Beothuk*, 58; Anonymous [McGregor], *Sketches*, 322.

¹¹ M.A.P. Renouf, "Prehistory of Newfoundland Hunter Gatherers: Extinctions or Adaptations?" *World Archaeology* 30, no. 3 (1999), 405.

eggs. One of Shanawdithit's drawings showed a collection of foods so preserved.¹² The sketch showed shelves of dried and preserved foods including caribou meat, seal meat and fat, lobster tails, and salmon, as well as containers for foods. Since Shanawdithit's experience of food preservation would have been during the very last years of Beothuk survival as a people, it reflects the food storage practices of a resilient and adaptive society making decisions to prepare for ongoing problems in access to their traditionally varied diet.¹³

iii. Concentric Zones: Outer Coastal, Inner Coastal and Interior

Key to interpreting the Notre Dame Bay region as a borderland is an understanding of how the Beothuk economy existed within a particular subarctic archipelagic zone.¹⁴ The zone was not monolithic, however; it had three distinct sub-zones, each with its own place in the Beothuk economy. Later, these three sub-zones also provided specific opportunities and challenges to European settlers. The concept of a tripartite ecological zone taking in the Bay's seaward and landward regions is a simple way of conceptualizing the complex ecology of the Beothuk territory in the eighteenth century (See Figure 2.1). As with any attempt to generalize about the natural environment in a place as diverse as Notre Dame Bay, it is imperfect, but serves the

¹² Howley, *The Beothucks*, plate between pages 246 and 247.

¹³ Donald H. Holly, "Environment, History and Agency": 19-30; Stopp, "Ethnohistoric Analogues": 301-328.

¹⁴ J.H. McAndrews and G.C. Manville, "Ecological Regions, ca AD 1500," in *From the Beginning to 1800*, vol. 1 of *The Historical Atlas of Canada*, ed. R. Cole Harris (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Plate 17.

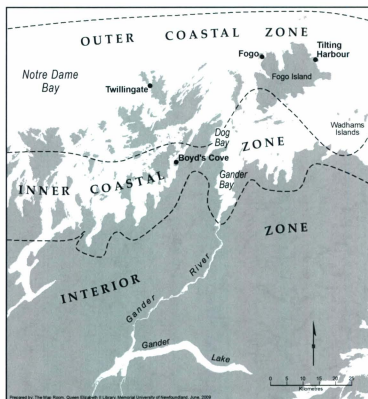


Figure 2.1 Zones of the Notre Dame Bay bioregion

purposes of a non-specialist ecological discussion such as the present one. The terms inner coastal, outer coastal and interior necessarily overlap with an established biogeographical terminology which will also be employed in describing the region. There are no strict borders between the zones, and in fact, there are elements of each zone throughout the entire area of the Beothuk range. In the period before the appearance of Europeans, and for at least two centuries after European visits began, the Beothuk ranged over the entire island of Newfoundland in a flexible cycle of resource gathering, hunting, fishing and foraging. The Beothuk timed their movements so that they could be in position when resources became available. Again, it was a flexible system, so that when Europeans arrived at Newfoundland for summer visits, the Beothuk were able to take advantage of the predictable autumn departures of these Europeans in order to visit their temporarily abandoned fishing bases to collect useful items. This seasonal, resource-driven migration can be seen as similar to those of other Native groups who positioned themselves to be near European traders at certain times of the year.¹⁵

The *outer coastal* area of Notre Dame Bay encompasses the smaller offshore islands such as Funk Island, the larger, inshore islands such as Fogo Island and Change Islands, and the headlands and open coastal areas of the main body of the island of Newfoundland. Funk Island, on the outer edge of the outer coastal zone of Notre Dame Bay, acted as a navigational beacon for late-medieval and early modern mariners. Most of the earliest maps of the western Atlantic feature an island in the general location of Funk Island labeled with some version of the terms "island of birds," or "penguin island,"

¹⁵ Ralph Pastore, *Shanawdithit's People: The Archaeology of the Beothuks* (St. John's, NL: Atlantic Archaeology Ltd., 1992), 24.

in the various languages of the map makers. Indeed, the concept of Newfoundland seemed to be linked closely to the abundant presence of birds for late-medieval mariners and cartographers. Around the year 1503, a cartographer associated with Gaspar de Cortereal, the first European explorer to record Funk Island, prepared a map with a prominent "Y.-dos-Aves" or "island of birds," close to the true location of Funk Island.¹⁶ Gastaldi's *La Nuova Francia* map, published in 1556 as part of the first account of Jacques Cartier's voyages, portrays Newfoundland as an archipelago of islands with the central island labeled Terra Nuova and illustrated with two large birds.¹⁷ On this map, several other islands in the Newfoundland chain are similarly illustrated with birds, but other features in the western Atlantic are not. Cornelius Wytfliet's *Nova Francia et Canada* from 1597 features a prominent "Y de S. Iulianoiseaux" above "C. de Bonavista" and off the coast of the Northern Peninsula, again highlighting the volume of avifauna in the area.¹⁸ By the second half of the sixteenth century, maps of the region invariably referred to Funk Island in avian terms. Since published maps were widely circulated, cartographers openly copied one another's works, resulting in a somewhat standardized toponymy for prominent geographical features. Funk Island was one of

¹⁶ W. A. Montevecchi and Leslie M. Tuck, *Newfoundland Birds: Exploitation, Study, Conservation* (Cambridge, MA: Nuttall Ornithological Club, 1987), 48.

¹⁷ McGill University Department of Rare Books and Special Collections (hereafter MUDRB): G3400/556/G37/RBD/Map: Giacomo Gastaldi, "La Nuova Francia" in *Della navigationi et viaggi*, vol. 3, ed. Giovanni B. Ramusio (Venice: Nella Stamperia de Giunti, 1556), 424-425.

¹⁸ MUDRB: G3400/1597/W9/RBD/Map: Cornelius Wytfliet, "Nova Francia et Canada" in *Descriptionis ptolemaicae augmentum*, ed. Cornelius Wytfliet (Louvain: Johannis Bogardi, 1597), plate 18.

these and is thereafter labeled as “Bird Island,” or “Penguin Island,” or both.¹⁹ William Montevecchi has concluded that Funk Island’s role as a navigation beacon accounts for the island’s prominence on early maps. It is noteworthy that on his second voyage to the New World, Jacques Cartier left Europe and sailed directly to Funk Island.²⁰ Navigation of early fishing vessels was imperfect, so any prominent location marker would have been eagerly incorporated by ship’s masters into their navigational calculations.²¹ The large Funk Island seabird biomass has a biological footprint many times larger than the size of the rock outcrop itself; the large numbers of puffins (*Fratercula arctica*), murrens (*Uria aalge*), gannets (*Morus bassamus*), great auks (*Pinguinus impennis*) and other species could be seen, heard and smelled from miles away, depending on wind conditions.²² In 1770, the merchant Benjamin Lester took a trip to his Tilting outpost and passed by an island group he referred to as the “Stinking Isles,” probably the Wadhams Islands, which hosted another large seabird colony.²³ This highlights how these large

¹⁹ The Coronelli Map from 1689 shows the feature to the northeast of Cape Bonavista as “I. des Pinguins, ou Ilha das Aves – et.” Below this is another island labeled “Isle des Oyseaux.” See MUDRB: G3402.S3/1689/C6/RBD/Map: Vincenzo Coronelli, *Partie orientale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France : ou sont les provinces, ou pays de Saguenay, Canada, Acadie, etc. les peuples, ou nations des Etechemins, Iroquois...* (Paris: J.B. Nolin, 1689), n/p.

²⁰ This fact illustrates that by the early 1500s Funk Island was already a known landmark as well as a valued source of protein. For a translation of original documents related to Cartier’s journeys, see H.P. Biggar, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier: Published From the Originals with Translations, Notes and Appendices* (Ottawa: The King’s Printers, 1924).

²¹ George A. Rose, *Cod: The Ecological History of the North Atlantic Fisheries* (St. John’s, NL: Breakwater Books, 2007), 188.

²² Montevecchi, *Birds*, 52, 191.

²³ Dorset History Centre (hereafter DHC): D/LEG/F3, Lester Garland Papers, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 20 June 1770.

seabird colonies made a sensory impact on several levels. The word “funk” is an old English adjective that means a foul smell.

Funk Island was an important component of the Beothuk economy. They traveled there in ocean-going canoes to harvest birds’ eggs. George Cartwright wrote in 1792 that he believed Beothuk paddlers made the journey to Funk Island “once or twice every year” and returned with their canoes heavily laden with eggs.²⁴ Once English settlers moved into Notre Dame Bay, they quickly incorporated Funk Island and other nearby bird colonies into their varied resource-extraction regime. A group of Irish fishermen from Tilting were harvesting eggs and probably feathers at the site in 1792 when they encountered several Beothuks in a canoe and fired on them.²⁵

Beothuk use of Fogo Island is typical of their movements through these outer coastal environs, which would have been “brief, sporadic and task specific.”²⁶ During their warm-weather hunting expeditions, they would have passed briefly through the coastwise landscape of Fogo, or would likely have traveled mostly around the shore of the island by canoe while hunting birds or gathering eggs. The spring seal hunt would also have attracted them, and travel would have taken place on foot, over frozen runs,

²⁴ Howley, *The Beothucks*, 48.

²⁵ John Hewson, ed., “The Pulling and Liverpool Manuscripts,” (unpublished typescript, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland, [1984]). These mss also exist in published form, see Ingeborg Marshall, *Reports and Letters by George Christopher Pulling Relating to the Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland* (St. John’s: Breakwater Books, 1989). Montevocchi notes that from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, European fishing crews regularly stopped at Funk Island to harvest great auks for their meat. See Montevocchi, *Birds*, 148.

²⁶ Donald H. Holly, “An Archaeological Survey of Fogo Island, Newfoundland, 1997” (unpublished research report, Department of Anthropology, Brown University, Providence, RI, 1997), 72.

with supplemental use of the canoe in areas of open water.²⁷ Beothuk seal hunters would have been attracted by the easy access to pack ice, which nudges up against the windward coast of Fogo Island in the early spring.²⁸ Rocky coasts such as Fogo also appear to have had a measure of spiritual importance to the Beothuk. In the period before they finally lost access to the coast, they favoured coastal sites for interring their dead; there is archaeological evidence of at least one gravesite on Fogo Island.²⁹

The Beothuk traveled with more confidence in the *inner coastal zone*, where their skills in negotiating landscapes for gathering salmon, smelts (*Osmerus mordax*), and crustaceans (various species) yielded a rich harvest in the decades when they still had unfettered access to the zone. They spent most of their year in the inner coastal zone, an area that Europeans did not penetrate until the salmon fishery attracted English entrepreneurs in the early eighteenth century (see Chapter Four). Both the outer and inner coastal zones of Notre Dame Bay are part of the Northshore ecoregion, a regional climactic zone of irregular bays and inlets where the vegetation is more similar to the interior of island than any other of the nine ecoregions of Newfoundland. The inner coast was both a bridge and a border between the resource-rich outer coast and the protective but relatively poorer interior. The Boyd's Cove site was located in the inner coastal region of Notre Dame Bay, deep within the maze of islands and runs that characterize the area (see Figure 2.2). For the Beothuk band, or bands, that used the Boyd's Cove camp, the location gave them easy access to the Exploits and Gander Rivers and their corridors

²⁷ Holly, "Archaeological Survey of Fogo," 72.

²⁸ Ralph Pastore, "The Collapse of the Beothuk World," *Acadiensis* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 61.

²⁹ Holly, "Archaeological Survey of Fogo," 71.

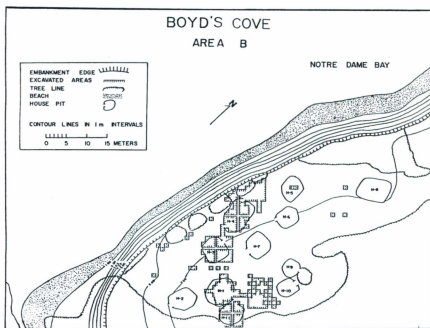


Figure 2.2 The Boyd's Cove archaeological site (DiAp-3)

Source: Ralph Pastore, "The Boyd's Cove Site: The Resources" (unpublished research manual, Archaeology and Ethnology Section, Provincial Museum, Newfoundland and Labrador, 31 March, 1993), n/p. Map by Anne MacLeod. Used with permission.

to the interior, but also offered comfortable proximity to the resources of the outer coast. Boyd's Cove and the nearby, related site at Inspector Island (DiAq-1) typify the value to the Beothuk of the inner coastal zone. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

The *interior* was the most continental part of the Beothuk range, with warmer summers than the coast, though the area immediately around Red Indian Lake has a slightly cooler summer temperature profile than the surrounding forests, as well as a more predictable, heavier snow cover in winter. In climatic terms, the continentality of the interior is experienced primarily through stable weather patterns, with a marked difference from the coastal (both inner and outer) regions of Notre Dame Bay. The lakes and rivers of the interior freeze over sooner, and stay frozen longer, than those on coastal islands. This aided in travel and furring for both the Beothuk and Europeans.³⁰ Overland travel at other times is made difficult by the extensive taiga, which explains the Beothuk facility with canoes of various types.³¹

The interior was a place of group and ceremonial affirmation during the winter months. Shanawdithit spoke to William Epps Cormack, who interviewed her extensively in the winter of 1829-30, of how winter evenings were a time for story telling and, thus, cultural reinforcement.³² As the eighteenth century progressed, the Beothuk increasingly relied on the interior of the island as a refuge, as evidenced by the fact that their later

³⁰ Colin C. Banfield, "The Climatic Environment of Newfoundland," in *The Natural Environment of Newfoundland, Past and Present*, ed. Alan G. Macpherson and Joyce Brown Macpherson (St. John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Dept. of Geography, 1981), 102-3, 128-129.

³¹ "Travelling over such a country, except when the winter has fairly set in, is truly laborious...." See: Anonymous [John McGregor], *Sketches of Savage Life* (1836; repr. [Toronto]: Canadian House, 1969), 319.

³² Anonymous [McGregor], *Sketches*, 322.

burials appear to have been exclusively in the interior.³³ As innovative hunter-gatherers, they were able to adapt their economy to the increased eighteenth-century presence of Europeans in the inner coast, especially salmon fishers. The deep interior of Newfoundland provided an initial measure of safety in the decades before Europeans started to penetrate the inland region of the Exploits River system. It is in the interior that we can see, more clearly, evidence of adaptation by the Beothuk to the changes in their world presented by the new human element on the coast. Some of these innovations were, interestingly, facilitated by the evolution of the area into a borderland and thus the presence of European technologies that were new to the Beothuk. George Cartwright reported in his journal that during his 1768 trip up the Exploits River with his brother John and several other navy men, they saw extensive “deer fences,” apparently designed to redirect migrating caribou toward rivers where the Beothuk could kill them from canoes.³⁴ The Beothuk economy appears to have been greatly aided by the iron axes that they acquired and which probably allowed them to make such fence-works with greater ease (see Figure 2.3). Indeed, the fences were so important that Shanawdithit reported to philanthropist William Epps Cormack that the inability to keep the deer fences in good

³³ Holly has argued that there was a noteworthy increase in the use of the interior by the Beothuk during the historic period as compared to the immediate pre-contact period, as shown by the change in settlement strategies between the Little Passage (the prehistoric Beothuk) and the Beothuk. See Donald Holly, “The Place of ‘Others’ in Hunter-Gatherer Intensification,” *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 2 (June 2005): 207-220.

³⁴ George Cartwright, *Captain Cartwright and his Labrador Journal*, ed. Charles W. Townsend (1911; repr. St. John’s, NL: DRC Publishing, 2003), 19-22. See also Marshall, *Beothuk*, 90. The use of deer fences was a practice among Native groups of the northeast, such as the Huron, though the vegetal nature of the fences results in low archaeological visibility; see for example Conrad E. Heidenrich, “Huron,” in Trigger, *Northeast*, 368.



DiAq-I-817



DiAq-I-12

Figure 2.3 Axe heads from Inspector Island (DiAq-I-817, DiAq-I-12)

Source: From the collection of The Rooms Provincial Museum Division, Newfoundland & Labrador. Photographs courtesy Elaine Anton.

repair was a principal reason for the decline of her people.³⁵ Cartwright commented on the large number of caribou heads he saw scattered around the riverbanks on the upper reaches of the Exploits.³⁶

The question of where the Beothuk obtained large numbers of iron European axes is an important and unexplored archaeological issue. They would have needed a number of axes to prepare the extensive fence works that so impressed visitors to the interior in the mid-eighteenth century. Did the Beothuk acquire trade axes from the French in exchange for furs in the early years of French fishing visits to Newfoundland? The presence of two iron axe blades (items DiAq-1-12 and DiAq-1-817) found by Ralph Pastore at the Inspector Island Beothuk site implies that by the period of the occupation of the more secluded Inspector Island site in the years after the peak use of Boyd's Cove, axes had become an important part of the Beothuk tool kit. The axes found at Inspector Island look identical to French trade axes of the period.³⁷ Laurier Turgeon and others have described how iron axes were used as trade goods by French visitors to the Canadian littoral from the earliest days of contact.³⁸ Iron axes were an important component of the suite of goods found interred with Beothuk in some of their graves, and

³⁵ Anonymous [McGregor], *Sketches*, 323.

³⁶ Cartwright, *Labrador Journal*, 19.

³⁷ Christian Morrisseau, "Huron of Lorette," in Trigger, *Northeast*, 392.

³⁸ Laurier Turgeon, William Fitzgerald and Réginald Auger, "Les objets des échanges entre Français et Amérindiens au XVI^e siècle," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 22, no. 2-3 (1992), 162.

Cormack found an iron axe entombed with bodies in a funerary structure at Red Indian Lake when he traveled there in 1827.³⁹

It appears that pressure from European arrivals on the outer and inner coastal region forced the Beothuk inland, over a period of decades, and, in conjunction with the availability of iron technologies, led to an increased reliance on caribou meat.⁴⁰ The challenge of such an adaptive innovation must not be underestimated. Once forced away from the coast, the Beothuk had to become a *true* forest people, and it was then that their economy faltered. Though viewed now as a woodland group, they in fact died off when compelled to live exclusively in the Newfoundland woods. Their lack of interest in a fur trade might even be explained by their relative discomfort with the forested interior. They incorporated the woodland caribou hunt into their economy only when forced to, and even then, they killed the caribou from canoes, at river crossings.⁴¹ The Beothuk were so comfortable on the coasts, estuaries and islands of Notre Dame Bay that they chose a large-lakeside location to pass the winter, waiting for a chance to return to salt water.

³⁹ Anonymous [McGregor], *Sketches*, 320. On axes at other burial sites see Marshall, *Beothuk*, 45.

⁴⁰ Peter Rowley-Conwy has argued that not only did European arrivals in the outer coastal region disturb Beothuk subsistence activities, but the eventual practice of European "winter camps" away from the coast, along the outer edge of the interior, pushed the Beothuk further into the interior and forced them to intensify caribou hunts and processing. I would add that furring and salmon activities also lured the Europeans inward of Notre Dame Bay; see Peter Rowley-Conwy, "Settlement Patterns of the Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland: A View from Away," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 14 (1990): 13-32.

⁴¹ Howley, *The Beothucks*, 194.

iv. Climate, Currents and Ocean Ice

Even during the final decades of the Beothuks' existence as a people, when they resided almost exclusively in the interior of the island around Red Indian Lake as well as in the inner coastal region of Notre Dame Bay it was climate, in conjunction with species availability, that determined the general migratory pattern of their bands throughout their annual cycle. Compared to the rest of Newfoundland, these two ecoregions are the most agreeable to humans in terms of climate and precipitation. The continental interior of the island experiences only occasional northeast winds bringing cold air off the Labrador Current.⁴² Notably, the Northshore ecoregion, encompassing the outer and inner coastal regions of the Bay, has the warmest summers of any of the coastal areas of Newfoundland, with a longer frost-free season. As well, the inner and outer coasts of Notre Dame Bay are the driest of the entire island of Newfoundland.⁴³

The climate of the coastal zone is affected more by the cold Labrador Current than by the warmer Gulf Stream, which famously douses the southern part of Newfoundland with irksome summer fogs. One effect of the Labrador Current's bearing down on Notre Dame Bay is the buildup of sea ice from December until the spring breakup. In recent years the establishment of sea ice, as well as the arrival of Greenland icebergs, has been progressively delayed, most likely by the effects of climatic

⁴² Antoni W. H. Damman, "An Ecological Subdivision of the Island of Newfoundland," in *Biogeography and Ecology of the Island of Newfoundland*, ed. Robin South (The Hague: Dr. W. Junk Publishers, 1983), 175.

⁴³ Damman, "An Ecological Subdivision," 178. Banfield, "The Climatic Environment," 112.

warming.⁴⁴ The sea ice and its seasonal rhythms were an important part of the economic schedules of both the Beothuk and the first Europeans to investigate the region, the French in the sixteenth century. The principal benefit of the pack ice for the Beothuk was its role as a vector for the large populations of harp seals which whelped on the floes in the late winter and spring. This spring ice pack, as well as the Greenland icebergs that travel south on the Labrador Current, presented major navigational hazards to early-modern fishers and navigators.

There is some evidence that, beginning in the 1720s, a general warming trend led to an increase in salmon populations at Newfoundland.⁴⁵ Flexible foragers, the Beothuk might have devoted more energy and time to salmon. Ironically, if this warming truly occurred, it partially explains the conflict between the Beothuk and English/Irish salmon catchers. Just at the time when the English moved into the inner coastal zone, the Beothuk might have increased the salmon component of their annual cycle of resource procurement. If restricted access to the coast and its marine harvest led to the substitution in the Beothuk diet of salmon, then the sudden curtailment of Beothuk access to the salmon rivers, in turn, could have been highly troubling to them, especially since the interior was not their preferred economic venue.

The destructive impact of storms was a source of anxiety for Newfoundland fishermen and merchants. There were several serious storm events in the latter half of the eighteenth century which were recorded as having resulted in substantial loss of life as

⁴⁴ Geoffrey H. Farmer, "The Cold Ocean Environment of Newfoundland," in Macpherson, *The Natural Environment*, 69-73.

⁴⁵ Rose, *Cod*, 38, 245.

well as property. The *Waterford Herald* reported in November 1792 that a “very melancholy accident” had occurred when a late summer gale of wind resulted in the loss of over a hundred men.⁴⁶ Poole merchants Benjamin and Isaac Lester recorded in their respective diaries at least two major storms, one in 1765 that resulted in much loss of life and destruction, and another in 1782 that damaged the Fogo facilities of Lester’s competitor, John Slade, and “greatly” damaged Lester’s fishing premises and structures in Notre Dame Bay at Tilting.⁴⁷ In 1766, English naturalist Joseph Banks received reports of a sudden, massive gale on the Labrador coast that resulted in the loss of numerous French *chaloupes*, three French ships, and one English brig.⁴⁸

v. Ocean Fauna

Though faunal resources in large part dictated the initial spatial arrangement of European settlement in Notre Dame Bay, the Beothuk had long integrated the oceanic biota of the region into their economy. It is not necessary to enumerate every species that might have shown up in the Beothuk diet, though the major features of their resource choices do help illuminate the faunal environment of the heartland region. Archaeological findings as well as information obtained from Shanawdithit point to seals and caribou as being the centre-pieces of their yearly round of hunting, with important secondary roles played by salmon, smelts and sea birds, both bird meat and eggs. Prior to

⁴⁶ National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI): *Waterford Herald*, “Waterford” column, November 20, 1792, #282.

⁴⁷ DHC: D/LEG/F4, Diary of Isaac Lester, 28 October 1765 and 2 November 1765; D/LEG/F8, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 1 December 1782.

⁴⁸ Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL): MG 253.1, Joseph Banks, “Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador commencing April the seventh and ending November the 17th, 1766,” 1766 (typescript).

the arrival of Europeans, the Beothuk moved almost constantly in order to be positioned at the right places and times to receive the principal animals of the hunt: caribou (interior), salmon (inner coastal), and seals (outer coastal). In between these principal hunts there were smaller, supplementary expeditions for valued resources. Birds at Funk Island, for example, were pursued for their meat, eggs, feathers, and beaks as decorative talismans. Finally, as with all hunter-gatherer groups, they would have been opportunistic as well, taking advantage of the unexpected appearance of species such as polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) or whales (various species).⁴⁹ Their economy was flexible.

The role of ocean avifauna in the Beothuk economy is worth exploring in some detail as an example of wider economic values exhibited by the group. The English toponymy of the region under study is full of features with bird-themed names.⁵⁰ The presence of numerous species of seabirds, in massive numbers, in the outer coast, had considerable economic significance for the Beothuk.⁵¹ Funk Island and its large seabird

⁴⁹ See Stephen L. Cumbaa, 'Diverse Fures and Deeres Flesh': *Animal Use by a 17th Century Beothuk Population at Boyd's Cove, Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland* (Ottawa: National Museum of Natural Science, 1984), 12-13.

⁵⁰ For example all of the following place names are from historic maps of Notre Dame Bay: Pidgeon Island, Pigeon Ledge, Pigeon Rock, Goose Island, Turr Rocks, Great Green Duck Island, Duck Island, Duck Rock, Penguin Island, North Penguin Island, South Penguin Island, see The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) War Office (hereafter WO) 78/721 "A Chart of the Island of Fogo on the Coast of Newfoundland Surveyed by Order of Vice Admiral Campbell Govr of Newfoundland &c. by Lieut Michael Lane, 1785"; Médiathèque Charles de la Morandière, Ville de Granville, France (hereafter MCM): CLGG66/Plate no. 12 "Le Pilote de Terre-Neuve ou Recueil de Plans des Côtes et des Portes de Cette Île Pour l'usage des Vaisseaux de Roi..." (1785, 1792); Map Room, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland (hereafter MRQ), British Admiralty Map no. 293, "East Coast of Newfoundland Gander Bay to Cape Bonavista..." (1873).

⁵¹ Roberts J. Mednis, "Indigenous Plants and Animals of Newfoundland: Their geographical affinities and distributions," in Macpherson, *The Natural Environment*, 241-

populations marked the outer maritime limit of the Beothuk world. In addition to the obvious physical distinctions of the land and seascape, the sight, smell and sound of seabirds would have been one of the things that clearly distinguished the outer coast from the interior. About a third of the faunal remains at Boyd's Cove were avian, when measured in terms of reconstituted individuals. Birds' eggs, either preserved or made into powder and cakes, appear to have been well integrated into the Beothuk diet.⁵²

The great auk of Funk Island was highly valued by prehistoric peoples of Newfoundland as well as by the historic Beothuk. This flightless bird was biologically and behaviourally similar to the various penguin species of the southern hemisphere, and was larger than members of related species in other parts of North America or northern Europe.⁵³ The Beothuk probably sought out great auk eggs for their large size, large yolks, and thick, durable shells.⁵⁴ Though Europeans had always valued them for their eggs and as a source of protein, the *coup de grâce* for this species was the growth of the

242; W. Threlfall, "Seabirds," in South, *Biogeography*, 467-508. Bird parts have been found in Beothuk burial assemblages, as well as those of pre-Beothuk Eskimo and Indian residents of Newfoundland; see: Marshall, *Beothuk*, 399, 410, 419.

⁵² Marshall, *Beothuk*, 67.

⁵³ Keith A. Hobson and William A. Montevecchi, "Stable Isotopic Determinations of Trophic Relationships of Great Auks," *Oecologia* 87 (1991): 528-531; G.P. Burness and W.A. Montevecchi, "Oceanographic-related Variation in the Bone Sizes of Extinct Great Auks," *Polar Biology* 11 (1992): 545-551.

⁵⁴ W. A. Montevecchi, H. Chaffey and C. Burke, "Hunting for Security: Changes in the Exploitation of Marine Birds in Newfoundland and Labrador," in *Resetting the Kitchen Table: Food Security, Culture, Health, and Resilience in Coastal Communities* ed. C.C. Parrish, N.J. Turner, and S.M. Solberg (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2007), 101.

bedding industry in the latter half of the eighteenth century, especially in the American colonies.⁵⁵

vi. Forests, Flora, Wetlands and Bogs

Eighteenth-century Europeans and Native North Americans both viewed the deep woods with anxiety. Forests were dark and unknown, especially for incoming Europeans, for whom most European forests had long since been tamed. Europeans equated forests with savagery and primitivism: the domain of wolves.⁵⁶ As an archipelagic people the Beothuk traveled mostly via the riverine corridors of the interior and by canoe between various inner and outer coastal islands. Lauren Benton has recently characterized early European territories in the New World as being essentially corridors linking various "stopping places and destinations."⁵⁷ This describes Beothuk territory as well. They spent little time in the deep forest, only transiting it *en route* to resource locales. Predictably, the mysterious Beothuk devil figure that Shanawdithit sketched for Cormack in the winter of 1829 had emerged from the interior forest near

⁵⁵ William A. Montevecchi and David A. Kirk, "Great Auk" in *The Birds of North America* 260 (1996), 12; Carole Shammas, "The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America," *Journal of Social History* 14, no. 1 (Autumn, 1980): 7-9; T.H. Breen, "'The Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (1988), 73-104. The ledgers of Thomas Hancock, Massachusetts merchant, show significant shipments of feathers from Newfoundland to Boston, see Boston Public Library, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts (hereafter BPL): Ch.K.1.1, volume 1, Thomas Hancock Miscellaneous Receipt Book, ff 1v, 3v, 8v, 21v, 22v, 30v. Hancock generally traded rum for the Newfoundland feathers; see also W.T. Baxter, *The House of Hancock: Business in Boston, 1724-1775* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 52.

⁵⁶ James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1999), 22-23.

⁵⁷ Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires: 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17.

Red Indian Lake.⁵⁸ Still, despite the sense of disquiet that the forest engendered, the most important plant species for the Beothuk was the birch tree (various species). They used it in the construction of much of their material culture: canoes, houses, containers, and burial assemblages. Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) was also important to their economy as shown by the extensive riverside caribou fences along the Exploits River.⁵⁹ The famous red colouring on Beothuk skin was probably a combination of red ochre and plant dye, with the speckled alder (*Alnus rugosa*) as the probable source.⁶⁰

Though much of the Notre Dame Bay Beothuk heartland was composed of either taiga or forest, outer coastal headlands were characterized by a persistent carpet of heath composed of small woody plants and perennial grasses and herbs.⁶¹ The heathlands that colonized the coastal areas either naturally or in the wake of settler burning offered little to the Beothuk in terms of construction materials or vegetal resources. Nor could this sparse biome act as host to attractive land mammals. Whether the Beothuk used any herbs from this part of the landscape as foods or medicines is unknown, but it is possible. James Howley passed on a report of a Beothuk woman holding her sick child over a fire into which "certain weeds" had been thrown. The woman seemed to also engage in some

⁵⁸ Howley, *The Beothuks*, 247 and unnumbered plate between pages 248 and 249.

⁵⁹ Gary W. Crawford, "Northeast Plants," in *Environment, Origins and Population*, ed. Douglas H. Ubelaker, vol. 3 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 406-7. Though the caribou fences were reportedly extensive, they do not appear to have been constructed back into the country, but rather along the banks of the river; see Howley, *The Beothuks*, 30-31.

⁶⁰ Michael Deal and Aaron Butt, "The Great Want: Current Research in Beothuk Palaeoethnobotany," in *Hunter-Gatherer Archaeobotany: Perspectives from the Northern Temperate Zone*, ed. Sarah L. R. Mason and Jon G. Hather (London, UK: Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 2002), 21.

⁶¹ W. J. Meades "Heathlands," in South, *Biogeography*, 267.

form of prayer. The implication may be that some grasses were used as either medicines or as a component of liturgies.⁶² They were more than likely used in domestic settings as well. In 1787, a shipwrecked Breton fisher slept on a bed of grasses when he was the guest of Natives in the La Scie area.⁶³ The barrens were valuable, on the other hand, to European settlers who used them as sources for the collection of hay for domesticated animals. Benjamin Lester was transporting late-summer boatloads of hay from Tilting to Trinity during the early 1770s. The hay was "hard won," with a single cutting during the temperamental fall weather.⁶⁴ Approximately one-quarter of Newfoundland's land surface is covered by wetlands and open water.⁶⁵ Much of this wet territory is composed of peatlands or marshes, important ecosystems which likely had only a marginal place in the Beothuk economy.⁶⁶ Mosses were used by both the Beothuk and the European newcomers in dwelling construction, as a way to fill cracks and stop drafts.⁶⁷

The Beothuk diet was poor in plants, though the land did offer them an abundance of fruit in the form of different species of berries, available from mid-summer into the

⁶² Howley, *The Beothucks*, 180.

⁶³ Peter Bakker and Lynn Drapeau "Adventures with the Beothuks in 1787: A Testimony from Jean Conan's Autobiography," in *Actes du Vingt-Cinquième Congrès Des Algonquinistes*, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1992), 35.

⁶⁴ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 1 September 1770. On hay production in Tilting, see Mellin, *Tilting*, 190-192. For another description of hay production in Notre Dame Bay, see Aubrey Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications, 1979), 56-57.

⁶⁵ W. J. Meades "Heathlands," in South, *Biogeography*, 267.

⁶⁶ E. D. Wells and F. C. Pollett, "Peatlands" in South, *Biogeography*, 207-238.

⁶⁷ Deal and Butt, "The Great Want," 20; David B. Mills, "The Development of Folk Architecture in Trinity Bay, Newfoundland," in *The Peopling of Newfoundland*, 81; Howley, *The Beothucks*, 211; Marianne P. Stopp, *The New Labrador Papers of Captain George Cartwright* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 71.

fall. Unfortunately most berries are completely digested so their archaeological echo is faint. Pin cherries (*Prunus pensylvanica*), however, are available in Newfoundland and contain a stone which is robust enough to survive in archaeological contexts. Stones of this fruit were found at confirmed Beothuk archaeological sites at Boyd's Cove, Deer Lake Beach (DhBi-6), Parke's Beach (DgBm-1), The Beaches (DeAk-1), Ferryland (CgAf-2), and Russell's Point (CiAj-1).⁶⁸

vii. Landward Fauna

The faunal profile of a given region will change over time. Animal species will migrate into or through a region, in predictable annual or unpredictable decadal patterns, and others will migrate outward or become extinct. One way to get a picture of the faunal resources available to the Beothuk in the Notre Dame Bay heartland is by surveying the faunal remains recovered from archaeological excavations of Beothuk sites. Pastore stated that the Beothuk appear not to have been specialized in their hunting and fishing strategies. Foraging peoples tend to be both efficient and flexible in their exploitation of available resources, as well as innovative in their socio-cultural and belief systems.⁶⁹ One ecological anthropologist has characterized forager subsistence as that which is "derived from non-domesticated resources, species not actively managed by themselves or other human beings."⁷⁰ All the same, it is important to note that the faunal

⁶⁸ Deal and Butt, "The Great Want," 18-20.

⁶⁹ Peter Jordan, "Hunters and Gatherers," in *Handbook of Archaeological Theories*, ed. R. Alexander Bentley *et al.* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2008), 447.

⁷⁰ Bruce Winterhalder, "The behavioural ecology of hunter-gatherers," in *Hunter-Gatherers: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Catherine Panter-Brick, Robert H.

profiles of Beothuk archaeological sites may not give a complete locational picture of available resources. They appear to have carried animal remains some distance, to their base camps in the inner-coastal region, where they were processed and consumed.

A comparison by Pastore of the paleofaunal footprint observed at the interior Wigwam Brook (DfAw-1) and inner coastal Boyd's Cove sites can help to highlight the borderland nature of the Beothuk economy in two ways. First, since the two sites were probably used at different times, we can see how the Beothuk were forced to change their animal procurement system in order to adjust to the persistent infiltration of Europeans into the Notre Dame Bay heartland. Second, we can come to some conclusions about how work and diet may have differed between the interior and outer coastal regions. Pastore dated the Boyd's Cove site at 1650-1720, while the Wigwam Brook site is estimated to have been occupied in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, about a hundred years after Boyd's Cove. The faunal profile of the Boyd's Cove site differed considerably from that of Wigwam Brook. He attributed the major difference in the types and volumes of faunal remains between the two sites to the one hundred year time lapse between the times they were occupied. He saw the later Wigwam Brook site as portrait of the "dramatic dislocation" the Beothuk suffered in the interim between their time at Boyd's Cove and their time at Wigwam Brook.⁷¹ Without minimizing the trauma suffered by the Beothuk during the eighteenth century, the divergent faunal profile of the

Layton and Peter Rowley-Conwy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12.

⁷¹ Ralph Pastore, "Excavations at Boyd's Cove – 1984: A Preliminary Report," in *Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador 1984*, Annual Report No. 5, ed. Jane Sproull Thomson and Callum Thomson (St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth, 1985), 326.

two sites may also be a function of the relative differentials in the time of year of occupation and the biogeography of the sites. Nearly 99 percent of mammalian remains at Wigwam Brook were identified as being from caribou. The only remaining mammal biological material found were trace amounts of beaver (*Castor canadensis*), arctic hare (*Lepus arcticus*) and red fox (*Vulpes fulvo*).⁷² None of this should surprise: the Wigwam Brook site, located along the banks of the Exploits River and in the region of reported deer fences was most probably a specialized late-stage caribou hunting and processing site, with other species being procured in an incidental fashion only.

Boyd's Cove, on the other hand, appears to be a typical inner coastal base camp, a locale from which the Beothuk could procure a large variety of nearby mammal, avian and bird species. The site is located beside a stream which has a predictable annual smelt run, and a large number of smelt bones were indeed retrieved from the site.⁷³ Task-specific expeditions by canoe to the outer coastal district were greatly facilitated by the location of the camp. The immediate inner coastal neighbourhood also offered opportunities for gathering mollusks from the surrounding tidal waters. Harbour seals may have been nearby at certain times of year, as would some species of birds. Finally, short trips by canoe or on foot to the inner coastal area behind Boyd's Cove would have provided easy access to a number of fur-bearing mammals, and indeed beaver and marten as well as caribou, otter (*Lontra canadensis*), harp seal and polar bear remains were

⁷² Frances L. Stewart, "Faunal Analysis of the Wigwam Brook Site of Newfoundland" (typescript of an unpublished archaeological report, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, St. John's, NL, 1973), 5.

⁷³ Pastore, *Shanawdithit's People*, 29.

found at the site.⁷⁴ The mammalian universe available to occupants of the Boyd's Cove site was thus quite diverse and highlights the resource variety inherent in the Beothuk economy. Another source of information on the fauna of the region is provided by the inventories of furs carried away by merchant traders. The area inland and north of Bonavista had long been a site of intensive trapping by English furriers.⁷⁵ One typical cargo arriving at Poole in 1792 contained "373 beaver, 168 otters, 6 silver fox, 20 patch fox, 19 yellow fox" and assorted other peltry.⁷⁶ "Catt" (marten, *Martes americana*) appears frequently in ladings and was a seemingly prized fur. Surviving inventories also show the occasional wolf skin or bear (*Ursus americanus*) skin.⁷⁷ So, though large numbers of furbearers existed at Newfoundland, these animals represent less than 10 percent of the population in the Boyd's Cove faunal analysis. Was Boyd's Cove a task-specific site, perhaps a salmon or sealing camp? The wide spread of species at Boyd's Cove defeats the argument that the lack of furbearers was due to Boyd's Cove being a specialized hunting settlement like Wigwam Brook. Furbearers simply did not figure prominently in the economy of this archipelagic and coastal people.

Finally, as previously mentioned, foreign species of animals were transported into the Beothuk environment of Notre Dame Bay during the historic period. Within a few years of settlement, European merchants and planters carried cows, pigs and fowl to their new coastal homes. Oxen, sheep and goats made up the expatriate European

⁷⁴ Cumbaa, *Animal Use*, 12-13.

⁷⁵ "Furrier" is the early modern term for a European who is engaged in fur trapping and then basic processing for shipment.

⁷⁶ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 31 July 1793.

⁷⁷ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 25 July 1792; D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 28 January 1792.

menageric.⁷⁸ Dogs were omnipresent and by the late eighteenth century rats were coming ashore from the passenger and trade ships at Fogo, Tilting and Twillingate.⁷⁹ An inventory from Slade and Co.'s Fogo base for 1787 includes an entry for "5 rat traps."⁸⁰ The presence of rats in turn implies a small population of house cats to control the rodents.⁸¹ Lester's diaries record a number of inbound cargoes to Poole throughout the period, and they often include cow, calf, oxen or pig skins.⁸² The implantation of European animal and plant species, mostly root crops, was a form of colonization in its own right and represented a very rapid form of environmental change.

The Beothuk did not keep dogs. In 1768, John Cartwright wrote "Providence has even denied them the pleasing services and companionship of the faithful dog."⁸³ Faunal bone remains at Boyd's Cove do not show signs of having been chewed by dogs. The Beothuk were most likely surprised to see the first European arrivals tramping through the inner coastal region in the company of what appeared to be domesticated wolves. The Europeans, on the other hand, carried working dogs everywhere. Indeed, it seems that dogs and guns were a vital part of the European defensive and hunting tool kit upon

⁷⁸ George Cartwright procured chickens and goats at Fogo for eventual use at his Labrador station. Cartwright, *Labrador Journal*, 15, 31.

⁷⁹ This dissertation will use the English terms for Twillingate and Fogo except in cases where a French source is being directly cited at which time the French terms, Toulanguet and Fougue, will be used.

⁸⁰ PANL: MG 240, John Slade and Co. Slade Collection, Box 3, 1787 Ledger, "Inventory of Goods wth J.S.J. at Fogo fall 1787," n/p.

⁸¹ Faunal remains from seventeenth-century European contexts elsewhere in Newfoundland point to the presence of rats, house cats and dogs; see Lisa M. Hodgetts, "Feast or Famine? Seventeenth-Century English Colonial Diet at Ferryland, Newfoundland," *Historical Archaeology* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2006), 132.

⁸² See for example DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 26 July 1790; D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 16 July 1788.

⁸³ Howley, *The Beothucks*, 35.

arrival in the Bay. Europeans could smooth their poor adaptation to the Canadian boreal wilderness through the use of hunting and guard dogs. They used dogs to attack or terrorize the Beothuk on their forays into the interior zone on occasional revenge expeditions:

As we proceeded toward the wigwams the Indians seeing who we were caught up some thing some another many their children and all ran away up the Main Brooke and our dogs pursuing them. We could only come up with two women, but our dogs came up with more and if we had not called them off I believe would have torn some of them to pieces.⁸⁴

For their part, the Beothuk targeted Europeans' animals on some of their late-stage revenge expeditions. Benjamin Lester recorded in his diary the news of a Beothuk "raid" on Tilting in 1798 in which cows were killed and assorted gear carried off.⁸⁵ The cow raid might be interpreted as an attack on symbols of European territorial advance, a statement of protest by the Beothuk. One dead cow could be seen as an opportunistic target during a nighttime raid, but several dead cows looks more like an act of resistance and an attempt to communicate to the Europeans that they had gone far enough.

viii. Reassessing Boyd's Cove

The Boyd's Cove site has greatly advanced our understanding of the Beothuk hunter-fisher-gatherer economy in the Notre Dame Bay borderland. During the 1980s, Ralph Pastore led the excavation of four of the eleven housepits at the location and performed further work at nearby Inspector Island. Boyd's Cove provides a poignant

⁸⁴ This incident is from 1792. Hewson, *Pulling MSS*, 10. This dissertation will not use the Latin word *sic* to signal eighteenth-century misspellings.

⁸⁵ DHC: D/LEG/F10, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 11 Aug 1798.

portrait of the Beothuk at ease in the inner coastal surroundings that they preferred in the period prior to the European domination of the coast.⁸⁶ While they only visited the outer coastal region, the Beothuk actually resided for part of the year at Boyd's Cove and maybe other inner coastal sites. Pastore's findings illuminated many important aspects of the Beothuk world and show the Boyd's Cove Beothuk as a people far from besieged or hunted. Pastore's findings supported previously tentative conclusions on Beothuk diet, migration patterns, house types, spirituality, and material culture, and indicated tantalizing signs of a limited trade in glass beads and furs.

One of Pastore's principal conclusions from the Boyd's Cove work may need to be re-assessed, in light of French language archival materials that may not have been available to him in the early 1980s. Pastore dated the Boyd's Cove site to the 1650-1720 period during which, he assumed, there were no Europeans in the area.⁸⁷ He concluded the area was chosen as a site of occupation by the Beothuk because it was situated between distant French and English fisheries. This was a continuation of the traditional narrative that characterized the Beothuk as timid. Under this theory the Beothuk could hide at the Boyd's Cove camp and make occasional forays to distant fishing stations to pilfer iron goods, other scraps and refuse. The theory assumes that the Beothuk required a buffer zone of more than a hundred kilometres to both the north and south in order to feel protected from Europeans. On closer analysis, however, it seems clear that the time

⁸⁶ Ralph Pastore, "The Beothuk Florescence: Newfoundland's Aboriginal People in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," (paper presented at the 1992 Atlantic Studies Conference, Halifax, 1992), 23.

⁸⁷ On the positioning of the Boyd's Cove site between the English and French fisheries, see Pastore, *Shanawdithit's People*, 30 and Pastore, "Collapse," 66. On the dating of the site see *Shanawdithit's People*, 33-35.

required to travel by canoe to those distant English and French locations, and the energy expended to do so, would likely interrupt other Beothuk subsistence activities during the narrow window of time which Pastore allows for, basically late fall and early spring.⁸⁸ Pastore proposed that the Beothuk bands gathered together in the late fall and winter in the interior, and probably needed a couple of weeks to get there. It makes little sense that one band would delay that important autumn migration to paddle many miles over rough autumn sea, or through spring ice, to spend an extended period pilfering nails from seasonally-vacated fishing stations.

In fact, the Boyd's Cove band did not need to travel very far to harvest European iron, because the French fished within a few kilometres of Boyd's Cove throughout the period Pastore allows that they used the site most intensively (again, 1650-1720). It now appears likely that the Beothuk moved to Boyd's Cove specifically because of the proximity of Europeans and their material culture.⁸⁹ There is ample evidence that French fishers worked throughout the Bay even during the time when the bulk of French activity was located on the *Petit Nord*. With Twillingate only about 30 kilometres away by water (See Figure 2.4), the Beothuk easily scavenged metal and other items from French fishing sites there and at Fogo, slightly further afield. Rather than locate themselves timidly in a

⁸⁸ Pastore, *Shanawdithit's People*, 29-30.

⁸⁹ This would not make the Beothuk unique in any way. Throughout the history of Native-European interaction, Native bands settled close to European communities in order to gain access to trade goods, foodstuffs, and alcohol or for spiritual support. For an Atlantic example, see Laurier Turgeon, "French Fishers, Fur Traders, and Amerindians during the Sixteenth Century: History and Archaeology," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 55, no. 4 (October 1998): 588. Pope has allowed for migrations which placed the Beothuk in close contact with European material culture; see Peter Pope, "Scavengers and Caretakers: Beothuk/European Settlement Dynamics in Seventeenth Century Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1993).



Figure 2.4 Boyd's Cove to Twillingate / Toulinguet, 28 kilometres

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no man's land, the Beothuk appear to have positioned themselves in close quarters to the French, as they had done at other times and places, in order to access French material culture.⁹⁰

The Boyd's Cove neighbourhood offered too much to the Beothuk to have been simply a secure, secluded base from which to set out on the punishing 176-kilometre journey around Cape Freels to Bonavista (see Figure 2.5). Of course, the Beothuk might have chosen to travel to Bonavista through inland waterways, though the journey would have been more than 250 kilometres (see Figure 2.6). The Gander River/Gander Lake system terminates at the head of Freshwater Bay after only two short portages on either side of Square Pond. The nearest French post on the *Petit Nord*, La Scie, would have required over one hundred kilometres of hard paddling into the teeth of the Labrador current (see Figure 2.7). Again, the French fishing post at Twillingate was only 30 leisurely kilometres away, through the secluded and scenic inland sea of Notre Dame Bay.

There is ample evidence of French activity in the Bay during the period when Pastore assumed the Beothuk were hiding out there. George Pley, of Weymouth, represented to London in 1675 that the French were fishing in "the Bays of Foggs" which was one of the seventeenth-century names given to Notre Dame Bay and the area around

⁹⁰ Pope, "Scavengers and Caretakers."



Figure 2.5 Boyd's Cove to Bonavista by sea, 176 kilometres
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Figure 2.6 Boyd's Cove to Bonavista via Gander River, Gander Lake and
Square Pond, 264 kilometres
Copyright Google Earth 2009. Used with Permission

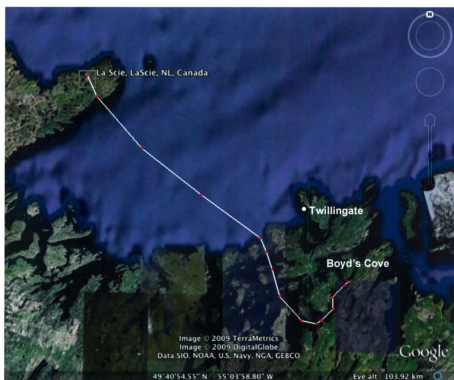


Figure 2.7 Boyd's Cove to La Scie, 110 kilometres

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Fogo Island.⁹¹ In 1701 Commodore Graydon gave a specific report on French activity at Newfoundland, and commenced his comments on the area in question thus:

The ports they fish in are as followeth:
 Whego, an Island 20 leagues N:W: of Cape Friles. Roome for 2
 ships to fish in there who Gen.^{ly} keep 8 boats apiece.
 Great Whego an other Island about a league further to the N:W:
 Room for 8 Sail of ships.
 Twillingate 7 leagues from thence Room for 4 ships.⁹²

In addition to the documentary record, there is tentative archaeological evidence of French activity in the Bay, including a clay pipe stem with a *fleur-de-lys* design, Normandy stoneware and Westerwald pottery.⁹³ French toponymy and oral history in the region also point to French activity in the period prior to English settlement in the early 1700s.⁹⁴ Even until recent times a strong oral tradition survived in the region, highlighting French activity in the Bay right up to the period of English/Irish settlement. In 1988, a retired fisherman from Tilting told Robert Mellin that there were round French fish-drying platforms on Pigeon Island. This confirms the likelihood of French activity on Fogo Island, at Tilting, in the period before they left area. It closely describes the historic French method of drying fish. In addition to the French station at Toulanguet,

⁹¹ W. Noel Sainsbury, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1675-1676, and Addenda, 1574-1674. Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, [1890]), 185.

⁹² CO 194 194/2 f 179, Commodore John Graydon, "An Acco^t of the French fishing upon the NE Coast of Newfoundland," 13 March 1701.

⁹³ See items DiAP-3-1674 [pipe] and DiAP-3-1888, DiAP-3-945 and DiAP-3-1109 [French stoneware], Provincial Archaeology Laboratory, Ministry of Culture and Recreation, The Rooms, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador); Holly found evidence of Westerwald pottery in a probable French seventeenth-century context on nearby Fogo Island, see Holly, "Archaeological Survey of Fogo."

⁹⁴ "France's Cove," just inside the entrance to Tilting Harbour, is one of a number of French or French-themed place names in the Fogo-Twillingate area. There is also a "Frenchman's Cove" in Fogo Harbour.

there were a number of other French fishing stations spread throughout Notre Dame Bay. Indeed, one strategy employed by French fishing captains was to fish *en dégrat* after arrival at a given port, in other words, they sent *chaloupes* to neighbouring coves and harbours so as not to overtax one particular set of fishing berths.

In 1765, a report written for the French *Ministère de la Marine* referred to Bonavista, Toulinguet, and Les isles de Fougue (Fogo Island and Little Fogo Islands) as “Ces quatres havres abandonnés vers 1718 par Les francois...”⁹⁵ The French withdrawal in 1718 was likely occasioned by a number of reasons. British naval captains reported in both 1684 and 1701 that the French in Notre Dame Bay were on guard against the Beothuk, though there are no reports of conflict. The French may have decided that unpredictable behaviour by the Boyd’s Cove band made the area too risky, given the French fishers’ short summer migratory presence in the area.⁹⁶ At the same time, the French fishery to the northward, in the neighbourhood of Conche, was growing in size and commercial gravity. It can be speculated that Channel *armateurs* decided that there was safety in numbers and structure, and so they began to send their vessels to the large fishery further north in 1718. What is not speculation, however, is that after the Utrecht Treaty in 1713, Île Royale became a focus for French fishing activity in the North

⁹⁵ Library and Archives Canada / Bibliothèque et Archives Canada (hereafter LAC/BAC), Fonds des Colonies [France] (FC), Série C¹¹F, Correspondence générale; Terre-Neuve et les pêcheries, “Questions des limites de la pêche,” 1765, f 270.

⁹⁶ J. W. Fortescu, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1681-1685. Preserved in the Her Majesty's Public Record Office* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898), 709; CO 194 194/2 f 179, Commodore John Graydon, “An Accoⁿ of the French fishing upon the NE Coast of Newfoundland,” 13 March 1701.

Atlantic and drew resources away from Notre Dame Bay and elsewhere.⁹⁷ Utrecht also emboldened English residents on the English Shore of Newfoundland, and they began to probe northward. Finally, there may be a possible ecological explanation for the departure of the French from the Fogo-Twillingate area in 1718. In 1763 an anonymous official writer, probably the commodore-governor of Newfoundland, wrote that the French had stopped fishing in eastern Notre Dame Bay in the early 1700s "...on account of the failing of the fishery there..."⁹⁸ The French withdrawal in 1718 fits very closely with Pastore's estimated 1720 departure date for the Beothuk from Boyd's Cove. Though speculative, it is not unreasonable to assume that the replacement of benign, migratory Frenchmen with acquisitive, resident English salmon catchers triggered the Beothuk adaptive response to withdraw deeper into the interior, perhaps with an interim retreat to Inspector Island, slightly more hidden in the maze-like islandscape of inner Notre Dame Bay.⁹⁹

ix. Summary

A discourse of extinction and collapse has tended to overshadow the principal accomplishment of the Beothuk: they creatively adapted their economy to meet the sudden challenges that faced them in the Notre Dame Bay borderland. The area was a

⁹⁷ Charles de La Morandière, *Histoire de Granville*, 5th ed. (Granville, France: Librairie H. et J. J. Roquet: 1998), 183-237.

⁹⁸ PRO CO 30/47/16, held in the Maritime History Archive at Memorial University as item MHA 17-A-1-024.

⁹⁹ Pastore, *Shanawdithit's People*, 33-34; On the Inspector Island archaeological site see Ralph Pastore, *Excavations at Inspector Island, 1987: A Preliminary Report*, (unpublished report, St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth Provincial Archaeology Office, 1988), 13.

busy Atlantic world crossroads, and the Beothuk initially took advantage of this fact by incorporating European iron products into their economy. It was the availability of numerous resources that initially attracted the Beothuk to the Bay and its contiguous landward reaches, and then the convenient arrival of European material culture provided another good reason to stay. They succeeded in interacting peacefully with visiting French fishers, but the arrival of English permanent settlers proved to be too much for their otherwise resilient character. A coastal people, they turned inland and commenced a major adaptive effort, large-scale caribou hunting.

Environmental change wrought by the hands of the English who came into the Beothuk heartland was considerable. They built wooden structures of various types in the harbours and along the rivers. They littered harbour bottoms with ballast stone and built wooden dams and weirs in salmon rivers. They dug gardens and interred their dead in the soggy ground. The English trapped the furbearers of the region, decimated bird populations and imported new, non-native species.

Ironically, this place that was so central to the Beothuk was but a liminal region for the French and English. As the southernmost site for the French migratory fishery Notre Dame Bay saw considerable, if not intense, French activity on the water and small patches of coast. For the English, the Bay constituted the unexplored realm just above their known territory; a mysterious northern region of Indians, Frenchmen, ice and islands. With the promulgation of the Utrecht Treaty in 1713 and then the withdrawal of the French in 1718 a period of rapid change, imposed from abroad, commenced. New territorial claims arose and with them, new forms of economic activity. Eventually,

settled communities appeared and others, such as the Boyd's Cove camp, fell into disuse as the archipelagic Beothuk, ever adaptive and resilient, turned their attention elsewhere.

Chapter Three

The French Fishery in Northern Newfoundland

i. *La Grande Pêche* in the French Atlantic

The early modern seasonal Newfoundland fisheries, known then and now by the French as *la Grande Pêche*, were a major and long lived industrial enterprise.¹ A migratory fishery pioneered by Spanish, Portuguese, Breton, Norman and Basque fishers, it attracted the attention of English adventurers in the latter part of the sixteenth century.² There were two principal forms of French fishery practiced in the vicinity of Newfoundland: the green or bank fishery and the dry or sedentary fishery. The green fishery was prosecuted on the offshore banks, and the dry fishery on the “French Shore” coasts of Newfoundland such as Notre Dame Bay and on the *Petit Nord*, as well as at Île Royale, parts of the coast of the Gaspé, and Labrador. By the eighteenth century, the French Channel ports of Saint Mâlo, Granville and Saint Brieuc accounted for more than 90 percent of the French Newfoundland vessels.³ *Armateurs* or shipowners from Granville and Saint Mâlo specialized in outfitting ships for the shore-based, migratory

¹ As an important historical era, *la Grande Pêche* is traditionally capitalized in French.

² Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 15-16. On the Portuguese at Newfoundland, see Darlene Abreu-Ferreira, “Portugal’s Cod Fishery in the 16th Century: Myths and Misconceptions” in *How Deep is the Ocean? Historical Essays on Canada’s Atlantic Fishery*, ed. James E. Candow and Carol Corbin (Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1997), 31-44.

³ Jean-François Brière, *La pêche française en Amérique du Nord au XVIII^e siècle* (St. Laurent, QC: Editions Fides, 1990); on French port concentrations see: Brière, “The French Fishery in North American in the Eighteenth Century,” in Candow, *How Deep is the Ocean?*, 53.

fisheries located in the north of the island.⁴ Pope has commented on the paradox of this highly localized organizational infrastructure directing an international or at least transatlantic trade.⁵ The *Roles d'Inscription* in the naval archives at Cherbourg confirm that in the eighteenth century, the French Atlantic fisheries exhibited a vernacular character, with ships crewed by men from tightly clustered hinterland parishes and voyages directed by investors in nearby ports like Granville. The annual entries for sailors indicate a maritime life that was highly seasonal in its work patterns, as it had been from the sixteenth century.⁶

In several publications and one magisterial, three-volume work, Charles de la Morandière presented the history of the French North American fisheries up to 1789.⁷ As he himself was a *Granvillais*, he devoted special attention to that town and its fishing industry. The volumes are indispensable for their coverage of all aspects of the trade, as well as the political and macro-economic context in which it was practiced. Of equal

⁴ Jean-François Brière, "The Port of Granville and the North American Fisheries in the 18th Century," *Acadiensis* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 93-107; Brière, "Saint-Malo and the Newfoundland Fisheries in the 18th Century," *Acadiensis* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 131-138; Brière, "Le trafic terre-neuvier malouin dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle 1713-1755," *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 11, no. 22 (November 1978): 356-374.

⁵ Pope, "The 16th-century Fishing Voyage," 16-17.

⁶ Pope, "The 16th-century Fishing Voyage," 25; Archives de la Marine à Cherbourg (Service Historique de la Défense) (hereafter AMC): Roles d'Armement et d'Inscriptions, 12P³1 to 12P³8.

⁷ Charles de la Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française de la morue dans l'Amérique septentrionale (des origines à 1789)* 3 vols., (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1962, 1962, 1966); La Morandière, *Histoire de Granville*, 5th ed. (Granville: Librairie H. et J.J. Roquet, 1998); La Morandière, "Histoire de la pêche française de la morue au point de vue économique et politique," in *Géo-économie de la morue au point de vue économique et politique* ed. Jean Malaurie (Paris, 1969); La Morandière, *The French Cod Fishery in Newfoundland from the 16th Century to the Present: Its Economic, Social and Political Significance*, trans. Aspi Balsara (St. John's, NL: Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2005).

importance to students of the French Newfoundland fisheries is the work of historian Jean-Francois Brière. His work complements that of la Morandière in that Brière's historian's eye is more analytical than that of la Morandière. What is clear from the work of both writers is that by the eighteenth century the Saint Mâlo and Granville *armateurs* developed a fishery that was more formalized and disciplined than the English practice. Various official *ordonnances*, promulgated from the earliest days of the French trade, dictated such things as the minimum age of ships' boys or the requirement that a surgeon be added to the crew of larger ships. The compensation, responsibilities and work conditions in the French fishery were codified in extensive agreements between the merchants and *armateurs* on the one hand, and the officers and crew on the other.⁸ The West Country English fishery was more of a mercantile free-for-all as compared to the French version.

The French state valued the fishery for the same reasons that the English did. It was seen as an indispensable way to maintain a stock of trained sailors for the Navy. This imperative arose especially during the negotiations for the Treaty of Utrecht, an exercise that forced the French to consider how "resolutely maritime" was the character of their empire.⁹ It appeared again in the Peace of Paris at the end of the Seven Years' War. At the end of that conflict the French had to "consider the relative merits of their

⁸ See for example Library and Archives Canada / Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F, Correspondance générale; Terre-Neuve et les pêcheries, vol. 5 (hereafter LAC/BAC C¹¹F/5) ff 140-146v, "Extrait et la délibération passée entre les négociants et armateurs, et les capitaines et officiers des navires de pêches (Granville)," 25 May 1743.

⁹ Dale Miquelon, "Envisioning the French Empire: Utrecht, 1711-1713," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 653-677.

different colonies" as well as those parts of the French Atlantic that were not colonies, such as the migratory Newfoundland fisheries.¹⁰ Laurent Dubois has recently pointed out that, ironically, it was during the demise of the French Empire that disparate components of the French Atlantic were suddenly treated as parts of an important whole, and this would apply to the Newfoundland fisheries as well. Having lost most of their North American territories, French officials expressed genuine concern that the loss of the fisheries would degrade their naval strength.¹¹ As will be seen below, they tried to re-establish their claims to fishing locations in Notre Dame Bay in the 1760s and 1770s before finally agreeing to accept expanded access on the west coast of Newfoundland in 1783.¹² This process highlighted the sense in which the Newfoundland fisheries were prosecuted during a long eighteenth century of French imperial decline. Part of Notre Dame Bay's borderland nature, from the French perspective, lay in its peripherality and thus expendability. Ultimately, French commitment to the region was as weak as the English commitment was strong, and the reason for this lies in the key differences between the French migratory and the English resident fisheries. For a French merchant in Granville, the decision where to send his ships and men in a given year was akin to a modern investor deciding which stock market shares to buy this year. If a chosen harbour or bay did not work out, he could easily allocate his money elsewhere the following year.

¹⁰ Laurent Dubois, "The French Atlantic," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 143.

¹¹ Silvia Marzagalli, "The French Atlantic," *Itinerario* 23, no. 2 (1999): 70-83; Jean-François Brière, "L'état et le commerce de la morue de Terre-Neuve en France au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française* 36, no. 3 (December 1982): 323-338; Brière, "Pêche et politique à Terre-Neuve au XVIIIe siècle: la France véritable gagnante du traité d'Utrecht?" *Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 2 (1983): 168-187.

¹² Janzen, "French Shore Dispute"; La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche*, 2: 893-932.

In fact, French captains had the mandate to shift operations mid-year if circumstances required it.¹³ The eighteenth-century French fishery was structured, financed and managed from French ports, and regulated from Paris. It can be conceptualized simply as a business where the production field was located at a remote distance from the managerial and financial centre. For the English, there was far more gravity in the decision to pursue a fishery in a given location, as will be explained below. Once committed to a given location, the English merchant or planter was invested in a multi-year, often decades-long relationship with a particular stretch of coast, its landward environment, and the native or prospective European residents of the area.

ii. The French Seasonal Fishery in Northern Newfoundland

Jullien Baubet was old, forty-six years, when his name was entered into the *Roles d'Inscriptions* for the port and parish of Granville in 1706 during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714).¹⁴ His rank was "*matelot de 1^e classe*" and his role *canonier* or gunner. Taken prisoner by the English almost immediately after sailing, he served initially on a French *corsair*, or privateer, out of Saint Mâlo. He returned to France that October. The following year, in June, he signed on board the *Francois Xavier* for the Newfoundland fisheries, though he did inform the registrar at Granville that he would be

¹³ In 1769, French captains moved their operations from Fougues (Fogo) to Toulouguet (Twillingate) after experiencing sustained harassment from English fishermen. See LAC/BAC C¹¹F/4 f 45, "Extrait des déclarations des capitaines de navires....," 5 February 1770. This dissertation will use the modern, English versions of the place names for Twillingate and Fogo, except when quoting a French source.

¹⁴ All of the information on Baubet's naval and fishing career comes from the following source: AMC: Roles d'Armement et d'Inscriptions, Officiers-mariniers et matelots de 1^e classe, 12P³2, f 52.

willing to serve the King in a more formal military role if necessary. There is a nuance to this entry that implies Jullien was happy, at such an advanced age, to fight for king and country but that he viewed the Newfoundland fisheries as being excessively dangerous. He returned from Newfoundland in January 1707, but in March he signed onto the *Ruby* of Saint Mâlo, a French cargo ship bound for Newfoundland. He was again taken prisoner in May 1709 just after he changed ships, this time to a frigate out of Saint Mâlo for action against the British. He returned to France in September of 1710 having spent more than a year in a British prison. Jullien only had the winter to recover. He signed aboard the *Marquis de Magny* for the *Petit Nord* fisheries of Newfoundland in April of 1711. His name was entered into the register of *Invalides* for the parish when he was fifty-six. He was registered, labeled and logged, even in his infirmity and inability to serve the King.

By the time Jullien Baubet spent his time in Newfoundland waters, the New World fisheries were entering their third century. They are a foundational part of Canada's historical narrative. In 1535, on his second voyage to the New World, Jacques Cartier made land at Funk Island, the outer limit of Notre Dame Bay.¹⁵ It is possible that Cartier or members of his Breton crew had knowledge of the north of Newfoundland through previous fishing expeditions. Early fisheries activity was part of a generalized interest in exploiting the resources of the new world. For example, Laurier Turgeon has demonstrated how early-modern French fishers along the North shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and in the Straits area engaged in informal fur trading with Native peoples as

¹⁵ H.P. Biggar, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (1924; repr. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 39.

an adjunct to fishing.¹⁶ French fishers likely used their ancient customary right of *portage*, from the earliest days of the North American fishery, to carry pelts back to France for trade upon arrival.¹⁷ Cartier related that in 1534 he encountered Natives in Chaleur Bay who waved furs and seemed eager to enter into a dialogue.¹⁸ Rudimentary exchanges of furs with early fishing crews were likely the basis for the first contacts between Natives and Europeans in the New World.¹⁹

Baubert's career exemplifies how, by the early eighteenth century, the French fisheries had evolved into a trade governed by state processes and characterized by formalized labour practices. The professional French cod fisheries served a strong domestic French demand for both salt-dried and green (wet) fish, but they also answered several key needs for the French state.²⁰ Yet, the French Atlantic fisheries differed from other elements of the French imperial project of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in one very important way. Though they operated under state-imposed rules and were

¹⁶ Laurier Turgeon, William Fitzgerald and Réginald Auger, "Les objets des échanges entre Français et Amérindiens au XVI^e siècle," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 22, no. 2-3 (1992), 152-167; Turgeon, "French Fishers, Fur Traders, and Amerindians during the Sixteenth Century: History and Archaeology," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser., 55, no. 4 (October 1998): 585-610; 585-610; Turgeon, "The Tale of the Kettle: Odyssey of an Intercultural Object," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 1-29.

¹⁷ Peter Pope, "The Practice of Portage in the Early Modern North Atlantic: Introduction to an Issue of Maritime Historical Anthropology," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series 6 (1996): 19-41.

¹⁸ H.P. Biggar, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier: Published from the Originals with Translations, Notes and Appendices* (Ottawa: The King's Printers, 1924), 49.

¹⁹ Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 128, 134-5.

²⁰ Laurier Turgeon, "Le temps des pêches lointaines: permanences et transformations (vers 1500 - vers 1850)" in *Histoire des pêches maritimes en France* ed. Michel Mollat (Paris: Bibliothèque Historique Privat, 1987), 157-166; C. Grant Head et al., "The Fishery in Atlantic Commerce," in Harris, *The Historical Atlas of Canada*, 1: Plate 28.

valued as a training ground for able seamen, the fisheries were essentially the private business ventures of a limited number of shipowning merchants in a small number of French Channel and Atlantic coast ports. As the eighteenth century wore on and French losses in the Atlantic world began to mount, the value of the Newfoundland fisheries was increasingly appreciated, despite the fact that the fisheries offered no corresponding territorial holdings that could be viewed as vital to French military or commercial interests.²¹ Nonetheless, the fisheries operated under the same *Marine*-directed system of controls and oversight and shared the same military ethos that infused all French colonial activity.²² As a result of Colbert's innovations in the late seventeenth century, most fishing ships were required to double as war ships in times of national need. French port towns and their hinterlands provided large numbers of young men for whom time in the fisheries, and the navy, was an attractive alternative to rural life in Bourbon France. A detailed and rigid system of naval *inscription* was required for both ships and their sailors and has left a considerable body of primary sources on the naval careers of fishing crews.²³ Port registrars received and logged men who chose to enter naval service, and the men were tracked with brief annual entries until they left the service, died, or were discharged as *invalides* as was the case with Jullien Baubet. All fishers in French ships held ranks that corresponded to their roles in a naval setting should the ship's services be

²¹ Marzagalli, "The French Atlantic," 75; On the value to the French of the fisheries in treaty negotiations, see Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and the Seven Years' War* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 198.

²² Dubois, "The French Atlantic," 141.

²³ Patrick Villiers and Pascal Culerrier, "Du système des classes à l'inscription maritime: Le recrutement des marins français de Louis XIV à 1952," *Revue Historique des Armées*, no. 147 (1982): 45-53.

required for war. The weakness in the French system, of course, was that in times of war the fisheries were virtually abandoned.²⁴ Ships too were registered in their home ports and then tracked throughout their useful lives with information on annual movements, as well as crew and armaments, for both military and commercial roles. One example among hundreds would be *Le Marquis des Beaux* constructed in 1730 in Granville. The ship was registered to carry 80 men "*En Guerre*" and 40 men "*En Marchandise*." Likewise it was authorized to carry 24 cannons when operating as a warship and twelve when operating as a merchantman.²⁵ It spent its entire Atlantic life sailing between France and Newfoundland. Participants in the French fisheries were thus an overt part of wider state processes while their English counterparts played only a derivative role in imperial affairs. Even the physical appearance of French Newfoundland fishing stations communicated the official nature of the trade, as compared with those of the English. Joseph Banks reported in 1766 that the English slept in small cabins scattered around their fishing rooms, whereas the French tended to sleep in their hammocks in a central stage or cook room. A French fishing room thus had more of the appearance of a military post, complete with barracks.²⁶

²⁴ Turgeon, "Le temps des pêches lointaines," 154.

²⁵ AMC Roles d'Armement et d'Inscriptions, Matricule des batiments de commerce, 12P⁵9, n/p (*Le Marquis des Beaux*.)

²⁶ Banks was impressed by the orderliness of the French fishing stations he visited on the *Petit Nord* in 1766. Of the French fishing rooms, he wrote "They excel us but more in their neatness & manner of carrying on business than in any superiority...of curing." See Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL): MG253.1, [typescript], Joseph Banks, "Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador Commencing April the Seventh and ending November the 17th, 1766," 30, 32.

The early fisheries in Notre Dame Bay should be viewed as a somewhat expendable part of the northern Newfoundland French fisheries as a whole. Notre Dame Bay was the southernmost limit of a fishery which eventually came to be centred on ports such as Conche and Croque in the far north of the island. Historical sources do not give the impression that the better harbours in Notre Dame Bay, such as Twillingate and Fogo, received sustained annual attention from French fishing captains. Still, they were known to the French and considered part of the migratory, shore-based French fisheries however peripheral they were to the core areas of French activity in the North.²⁷ The nature of the French seasonal fishery, indeed one of its strengths, was a degree of locational flexibility for the summer's activity and, as seen above, this even extended to intra-seasonal variability in areas of prosecution. Unlike the English settled fishery, where planters and their crews were tied to a given stretch of coast within a day's return trip from home, the French captain inbound to Newfoundland in the spring of the year had a variety of options open to him. In some years, a subset of captains chose Notre Dame Bay.

Much information on French Newfoundland activity can be gleaned from British colonial documents. For example, English petitioners often cited the French presence in Newfoundland as a key justification for setting up some form of settled government there. In the years after the Seven Years' War, the English demanded detailed information from French fishing captains and the French seem to have complied with little objection. The French equivalent of the English merchant based in Trinity or Fogo

²⁷ Later boosters of French fishing rights at Newfoundland would insist that Notre Dame Bay had always been a core part of the French fishery, though this was simply post-Seven Years' War posturing. See LAC/BAC, Série C¹¹F/4 f 270, "Questions des limites de la pêche," 1765.

was the shipowner back in Granville who was, essentially, an investor, and this informs the types of sources available to modern researchers. This is not to deny that the French migratory fishery was an enterprise lacking in human colour. There is, for example, a rich folklore which surrounds many aspects of *la Grande Pêche*, including songs and superstitions.²⁸ There was no material difference in the working lives of the French men who served farther up on the *Petit Nord* as compared to the fishing grounds around Twillingate. In fact most fishers would have served in multiple locations over the course of their careers. Historians can thus get a general sense of the social history of the men who worked in Notre Dame Bay from a reading of sources related to the northern fisheries as a whole.

A poignant window into the conditions of the men who worked in the seasonal fishery is provided by a pamphlet produced in revolutionary Paris.²⁹ The document cited the Granville-based Newfoundland fisheries as its central example of the poor treatment of common people by elite shipowners. Crews arrived at Newfoundland early in the year and began to cut lumber for shore stations and for firewood. Accidents were frequent at this stage, from both axe wounds and falling trees. Surgeons, though required by regulations, usually stayed in a central location on shore and were in general very

²⁸ See the dated but fascinating Paul Sébillot, *Le folk-lore des pêcheurs* (1901; repr. Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve and Larose, 1968). In 1766, Banks was impressed by the quality of the singing of the French shore crews. See PANL: MG253.1, [typescript], Joseph Banks, "Journal," 32.

²⁹ M. Marat, *L'ami du peuple, ou le publiciste parisien; Journal politique et impartial* no. 285 (Paris: L'imprimerie de Marat, 1790). The pamphlet's revolutionary historical context and polemical tone should be kept in mind.

difficult to recruit for the Newfoundland fisheries.³⁰ Granville fishermen reported numerous abuses including whippings, gangrene from poorly treated injuries, overwork, and hazing by the officers of the fishing stations. Maltreatment of cabin boys was a notorious feature of the French fisheries.³¹ A Granville doctor, M. Caissac, enquired into the reasons for the "abyss" of the Newfoundland fisheries and concluded that it was principally related to the "sordid avarice" of the shipowners. The men could not even count on spiritual solace while at the frontier fishery. Early eighteenth-century provisions that all ships with crews of 25 men or over carry a chaplain were routinely ignored, and those priests that did go over for the summer stayed in a single location fraternizing with the officers and ignoring the "rough men" of the fishery.³²

The nature of the fishing ship as essentially a mobile seaborne labour camp meant that the diet of French fishermen was bland, as much of the fare was carried in barrels from France in the spring. Food was boring and in short supply but apparently sufficient to nourish hard-working men for long periods.³³ By the mid-eighteenth century the value of fresh vegetables in treating scurvy was recognized and attempts were made to grow food at shore stations and carry potatoes to the fishery from France.³⁴ The typical diet consisted of foods that could be used throughout a long summer without spoilage: dried

³⁰ Jean-François Brière, "The Safety of Navigation in the 18th Century French Cod Fisheries," *Acadiensis* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 85-94.

³¹ Patrice Perrette, "Problèmes médicaux et assistance médicale à la Grande Pêche Française de la morue (Terre Neuve et Islande) de 1880 à 1914" (PhD Diss, Université Paris VII, 1982), 173.

³² J. Lemétayer, "L'Armement morutier à Granville au XVIII^e siècle: 1725-1729" (Unpublished research report, Université de Caen; Caen, Basse-Normandie, [1979]), 54-55.

³³ Marat, *L'ami du Peuple*, 2-8.

³⁴ Perrette, "Problèmes médicaux," 190-199.

peas and beans, rice, cheese, salted pork and beef, anchovies and sardines, wine, vinegar and oil.³⁵ Officers ashore likely hunted for game when time and weather permitted.³⁶

Finally, there was always lots of stewed cod to eat.

The summer's work was extremely intense with every fair weather day being used for fishing. This even extended to Sundays, a point of extreme concern in the 1760s to English fishers in the borderland who saw French Sunday fishing as a combination of blasphemy, cheating, and disregard for the English constitution (see below, section vi). Work days were hard and long, commencing with the trip out to the fishing grounds at dawn or earlier if the weather was good. Personal hygiene was deplorable and men often went to bed in their dirty clothes, having worked all day among the detritus of cod fish parts. Those who worked on shore could occasionally wash with fresh water from streams. The cook rooms on shore where the men slept were large enough to accommodate the entire crew and were lit with dirty oil lamps. Fishing was done by handlining so injuries from hooks were very common and quite troublesome as they could easily become infected. Accidents related to cold and freezing were common especially early and late in the season.³⁷ An excellent survey of medical issues in the French Atlantic fisheries lists the most frequent health complaints of Newfoundland fishermen as skin lesions and infections; strains, ruptures and muscular damage; rheumatism and arthritic conditions; strokes and cerebral events from overwork and

³⁵ [Le Sieur] Dasser, *Architecture navale, avec le routier des Indes Orientales et Occidentales* (Paris: Jean de la Caille, 1677), 165.

³⁶ Hervé Jarry, "L'Assistance médicale et la médecine de la Grande Pêche à Terre Neuve, au Groenland an Islande et en Atlantique Nord de 1548 à 1972 (PhD Dissertation, Université Nantes, 1974), 68-70.

³⁷ Perrette, "Problèmes médicaux," 25, 29, 31, 169, 176-180.

strain; gastric and digestive complaints; bronchitis and all manner of lung diseases; and eye infections. Accidental death came most often from drowning.³⁸ Prior to the *Marine* ordinances of 1681, medical assistance at the fisheries was disorganized but there is some evidence that the late-medieval system of barber surgeons extended to the fisheries. These men stayed on shore and also aided in preparing meals and hunting game animals.³⁹ After the ordinances, ships were required to carry a certified surgeon and a medical box, but the system seems to have been largely ignored. In 1717 a more exact set of regulations was promulgated: ships with crews greater than twenty were required to carry one surgeon and those with crews over fifty, two surgeons.⁴⁰

The fish-catching and shore operations of the French fishery were well established and uniformly practiced.⁴¹ The cleaned fish were washed in wooden stages (*chaffauds*) and then dried on flakes or on the rocks of the beach or harbour. After the complex, multi-stage drying process was complete, the fish were stacked in broad round piles on flat stone platforms, possible examples of which can still be seen in Notre Dame

³⁸ Jarry, "L'Assistance médicale et la médecine de la Grande Pêche," 173.

³⁹ Jarry, "L'Assistance médicale et la médecine de la Grande Pêche," 68-70.

⁴⁰ Perrette, "Problèmes médicaux," 63.

⁴¹ For excellent descriptions of French fishing and shore operations in the dry fishery, see Robert de Loture, *Histoire de la grande pêche de Terre-Neuve* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1949); Adolphe Bellet, *La grande pêche de la morue à Terre-Neuve depuis la découverte du nouveau monde par les Basques au XIV^e Siècle* 2nd ed. (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1902); Pope's description of the sixteenth century French Atlantic fishery provides a detailed description of fishing practices and organizational matters, many of which were unchanged by the eighteenth century; Peter Pope, "The 16th-century Fishing Voyage"; La Morandière includes a good description of the operations of the dry fishery, drawn from colonial and historic sources. See la Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 1:161-184.

Bay near Tilting.⁴² Given the tight summertime schedule, French processing locations tended to be located near the mouths of harbours or just outside harbour entrances, to minimize the time spent rowing to the fishing grounds every day. A 1772 French survey of harbours on the French Shore indicated that even by the second half of the eighteenth century the ratio of slightly more than five men per fishing boat or *chaloupe* was the rough standard.⁴³ Each *chaloupe* had a crew of three while two more of their fellows remained on shore, making up the fish. Also ashore and rounding out the overall numbers were the officers and surgeon or chaplain, if included. There was some cross-mobility in tasks performed.

There are numerous references to French fishing in Notre Dame Bay throughout the final years of the seventeenth century. We have already seen how the Beothuk likely developed their camp at Boyd's Cove in order to be at close quarters with the French at Twillingate during the fifty years before Utrecht. Commodore Graydon's 1701 report to the Lords of Trade included intelligence that the French were fishing in Notre Dame Bay and had "room for" fourteen ships of eight *chaloupes* each. This computes to 560 men using a ratio of five men per fishing boat.⁴⁴ In the first decade of the eighteenth century French migratory fishing traffic slowed to a crawl due to the War of the Spanish

⁴² In 1988 Jim Greene, a retired fisherman from Tilting told researcher Robert Mellin that "You can go out there on Pigeon Island, and you can see the bottoms of piles of fish right there now where the Frenchmen used to make the dried fish out there, and they had flat rocks, and they'd make the bottom out of those flat rocks, and then they'd make their pile of fish on top of those rocks." Jim Greene, retired fisherman, Tilting, to Robert Mellin, January 27, 1988, Dr. Robert Mellin, St. John's, NL, private collection.

⁴³ LAC/BAC, C¹¹F/4 ff 121-128v, "État de la pêche de la morue sèche et verte sur les côtes de l'île de Terre-Neuve...." 1772.

⁴⁴ PRO CO 194 194/2 f 179, Commodore John Graydon, "An Accoⁿ of the French fishing upon the NE Coast of Newfoundland," 13 March 1701.

Succession and when the Treaty of Utrecht limited French activity at Newfoundland to summer fishing only, Notre Dame Bay lost its place as a venue for seasonal fishing. Though there may have been some tentative efforts at war's end to re-establish some shore stations in the Bay, by 1718 the French had abandoned the region for the *Petit Nord*, where the French harbour at Croque had emerged as the *de facto* administrative capital of the French summer fishery.⁴⁵

iii. Interlude: 1713-1763

There was no French fishing in Notre Dame Bay in the 50 years between 1713 and 1763. There is only one mention in the British colonial records of French activity in the region, namely a reference by John Masters in 1743 to the fact that large numbers of overwintering English fishermen were staying at French fishing stations during winter furring and sealing expeditions.⁴⁶ Masters said that the French stations were ten leagues away from Fogo and Twillingate, in the direction of the French fishery on the *Petit Nord*. The reference could in fact be a description of French facilities on the French Shore at or near La Scie. Of course, the borderland was not empty of Europeans during the five decades up to 1763. As will be seen in the next chapter, English salmon catchers began to move into the region shortly after 1713, and fur trappers had been exploring the landward reaches of Notre Dame Bay since the late 1600s.

The loss of Plaisance in 1713 and the establishment of Louisbourg at Île Royale as a venue for the continued pursuit of the shore-based dry fishery likely drew resources

⁴⁵ LAC/BAC, C¹¹F/4 f 270, "Questions des limites de la pêche," 1765.

⁴⁶ PRO CO 194/12 ff 1-2, John Masters to the Lords of the Admiralty, 6 September 1743.

away from Notre Dame Bay and the French Shore of Newfoundland. The picture is somewhat unclear. Though it is known that the dry fishery from southern Newfoundland was transferred to Île Royale, the degree to which the Norman or Breton fishers who targeted Notre Dame Bay and the *Petit Nord* also transferred operations to the new colony is an open question. Louisbourg quickly became a hub of French Atlantic trade after 1713 and was essentially a garrison town where powerful cod merchants and settled *habitant-pêcheurs* provided the commercial energy that sustained “this most mercantile of colonies.”⁴⁷ Balcom confirmed that the settler fishery at Louisbourg emerged very quickly.⁴⁸ This would have been discouraging to seasonal fishers from Channel ports. Brière has noted that though *armateurs* from Granville struggled to incorporate Louisbourg into their trade, some merchants from Saint-Malo successfully transferred operations to Île Royale.⁴⁹ Granville was not designated as a port with permission to trade with the colonies, whereas Saint-Malo did have approval, and thus Granville’s colonial ambitions were thwarted.⁵⁰ Some data provided by Balcom confirm that men from Saint-Malo outnumbered those from the Coutances (the Granville-Cherbourg region of Normandy) among engaged workers at Louisbourg in 1752.⁵¹

Having been shut out of the colonial trade, Granville focused on seasonal cod fishing and the industry came to dominate the commerce and society of town even more

⁴⁷ Allan Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 98, 100-101.

⁴⁸ B.A. Balcom, *The Cod Fishery of Isle Royale, 1713-58* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1984), 49.

⁴⁹ Brière, “The Port of Granville,” 99; Brière, “Saint-Malo and the Newfoundland Fisheries,” 134.

⁵⁰ Brière, “The Port of Granville,” 106.

⁵¹ Balcom, *The Cod Fishery of Isle Royale*, 55.

so than in the past. In 1743 the customs that had developed around the practice of the Newfoundland fishery were codified into a set of regulations which formalized traditions of compensation, recruiting, and investment in fishing voyages.⁵² Unfortunately in 1744 France was drawn more deeply into the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) so the renewed interest in structuring the management and regulation of the cod fishing trade could not be put into practice until 1749. Voyages to Newfoundland fisheries increased strongly until 1755 but declined to near zero during the Seven Years' War.⁵³ The period between 1713 and 1763 appears to have been one of volatility and challenge for the French Newfoundland fishery. Change was forced upon the merchants and shipowners in the form of new options such as Île Royale, and the disappearance of others such as St. Pierre et Miquelon. The dry fishery in northern Newfoundland became aggregated on the *Petit Nord*. Notre Dame and Bonavista Bays were essentially abandoned until after 1763, when as a matter of imperial strategy the French tried to reclaim the harbours in the borderland that they had not used in a sustained way since 1718.⁵⁴

iv. The Concurrent Fishery in the Borderland: 1763-1783

French fishing in Notre Dame Bay in the period after the Seven Years' War was conducted under an umbrella of diplomatic change, with Twillingate as the centre-piece in the struggle by French fishers, as agents for the French state, to permanently regain

⁵² LAC/BAC C¹¹F/5 f 140-146v, "Extrait et la délibération passée entre les négociants et armateurs," 25 May 1743; Brière, "The Port of Granville," 99; La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 1:125-129; Villiers and Culerrier, "Du système des classes a l'inscription maritime," 45-53.

⁵³ See Table One in Brière, "The Port of Granville," 96-97.

⁵⁴ La Morandière confirmed that by 1763 the French had been absent from the region for fifty years, see La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 911.

access to fishing harbours in the region. Eager to offset other losses in North America and the Caribbean, French officials and their deputies in the Channel ports, Granville especially, sought to reclaim access to sites they had not used in nearly five decades.⁵⁵ In addition to confirming the nature of Notre Dame Bay as a contested land and sea borderland, the pivotal period from 1763 to the late 1770s generated a large cache of documents which allow modern researchers to analyze the fishery in the context of French imperial processes. The fishery emerged as a tool for gaining strategic advantage in treaty negotiations and for projecting state prestige and territorial presence. French fishing ship captains were used in the borderland as *de facto* diplomatic envoys to gather intelligence on the status of English settlements and to test English resolve in holding on to the harbours they had populated in the 50 years after Utrecht. The large volume of captains' reports is in itself evidence that French activity in the Bay after 1763 was more than simply fishing, but was rather part of a state strategy of testing treaty claims during a time of generalized French imperial retreat.

The period after 1763 was a time of ongoing contention between the French and the English in Notre Dame Bay, and much of the belligerence seems to have been choreographed by the French. An important personage in this process was Louis Bretel, a lawyer, former municipal official, shipowner and technical advisor to the French government on both the French Shore and the dry fishery in general. Bretel moved into the diplomatic sphere in 1763 as an advisor to Comte de Guerchy, the French ambassador to London who was negotiating with the British on the terms to end the Seven Years'

⁵⁵ La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 894.

War. Bretel subsequently enjoyed an impressive diplomatic career which culminated with his appointment as Chief Clerk in the *Marine*.⁵⁶ He advocated strongly for continued French access to the French Shore in the 1763 talks. He then engineered a strategy of sending trustworthy *granvillais* captains to harbours in Bonavista and Notre Dame Bays in order to communicate to the English who had settled there that the French intended on exercising their rights under Utrecht. As a shipowner and former municipal official of Granville, he had a personal interest in gaining access to the excellent fishing grounds in Notre Dame Bay, and this likely underpinned much of his service to the King of France.

A number of items had been left unresolved during the negotiations for the 1763 Treaty of Paris. One was the issue of French exclusivity over the French Shore.⁵⁷ Pending any resolution of the outstanding issue, the French position was that the region of the borderland, including Bonavista to the south, was an exclusive zone for the prosecution of the French seasonal fishery. The French seemingly assumed that the provisions of Utrecht as the French themselves interpreted them would prevail, namely that the French would have exclusive access to the area. Inherent in this interpretation is that there would be no English settlement in the area, as the French dry fishery demanded open access to summer shore stations. The English interpretation of the situation was that, though they accepted the right of the French to fish but not settle, they felt that they themselves could fish *and* settle there, too. Bretel saw all this as an opportunity. By the

⁵⁶ Charles de la Morandière, *Histoire de Granville*, 5th ed. (Granville: Librairie H. et J.J. Roquet, 1998), 159; La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2:977, 3:1246-7.

⁵⁷ De la Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 865-6.

second half of the eighteenth century the *Petit Nord* section of the French Shore was getting crowded. A survey by Bretel of French holdings on the French Shore (not including Notre Dame Bay) in 1765 enumerated 48 harbours where French seasonal fishers were established. This would mean that virtually every usable harbour was spoken for. Notre Dame Bay, on the other hand, was new territory to the French of the 1760s, having not been fished by them for nearly two generations, and Bretel estimated that Notre Dame Bay could accommodate 300 *chaloupes*.⁵⁸ Bretel was likely drawn to the borderland by its legal liminality. Not only could French state aims be furthered by the possible establishment of French summer fishing rooms in Notre Dame and Bonavista Bays, but Bretel himself would be the one to gain intelligence on the physical layout and commercial opportunities of harbours like Fogo and Twillingate. Ironically, this place that had been familiar to Jacques Cartier and was a home of the ancient French migratory cod fishery had become, by 1763, a new commercial frontier. For their part, the British suspected early that the area would be one of conflict under the unclear provisions of the Treaty of Paris. The Lords of Trade and Plantations represented to the King in a memo in March 1763, shortly after the Treaty was signed, that "...much will depend upon the Temper, Judgement & Discretion of the Officer of the Navy, who shall be appointed to superintend that Fishery, and who certainly should be instructed to adhere to the 13th Article of the Treaty of Utrecht with Justice of the subjects of both Crowns."⁵⁹ In October of 1763, the British commodore governor of Newfoundland, Thomas Graves,

⁵⁸ LAC/BAC, Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F, Correspondance générale; Terre-Neuve et les pêcheries, "Havres de la côte de Terre-Neuve depuis le Cap-Bonavista..." vol. 3, 1765, ff 104-104v.

⁵⁹ PRO CO 194/26 f 70, Lords of Trade to His Majesty the King, 15 March 1763.

ordered that any French structures not related to the drying of fish be burned at year's end, and that any French ships remaining after the season be "driven off." In the case of *chaloupes*, he ordered that those carried over from France and left over the winter be left alone, but those *chaloupes* built in Newfoundland of local materials should be burned.⁶⁰ In the absence of clarity in the Treaty on how to manage the details of what the English were calling the "concurrent fishery," the British naval officials in charge of policing the arrangement decided that the strict response of destroying French property was in order. Immediately after the Treaty was signed, then, the conditions for conflict were set.

Bretel grasped the opportunity of his proximity to diplomatic circles with immediate fervour. In 1763 he outlined the French position on the Newfoundland fisheries and their importance to French ports, especially Granville and Saint Mâlo.⁶¹ Bretel was deputed in the letter by the Minister of the *Marine*, Étienne François duc de Choiseul, to represent the interests of Granville in the circle of people advising ambassador de Guerchy in his ongoing discussions with the British.⁶² The next year Bretel proposed measures for increasing the consumption of cod in France.⁶³ In late 1765 and early 1766, Bretel proposed paying a bounty to trusted Granville captains to attempt to regain access to the harbours at Bonavista, Fogo and Twillingate. For a total of about

⁶⁰ PRO CO 194/26 ff 125-26, Capt. Graves to Capt. Ruthven, HMS *Terpsichore*, 15 October 1763.

⁶¹ One interpretation of the post-1763 French interest in Notre Dame and Bonavista Bays was that it would provoke diplomatic talks with the English wherein the French could solidify their claims in other parts of Newfoundland. See Brière, "Pêche et politique à Terre-Neuve," 168-187.

⁶² LAC/BAC, Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F, Correspondance générale; Terre-Neuve et les pêcheries, "Précis des négociations de M. le comte de Guerchy....," vol. 3, 28 December 1763, ff 50-57v.

⁶³ LAC/BAC C¹¹F/5 ff 52-52v, "L. Bretel to duc de Choiseul" 16 December 1764.

18,000 livres, 4 ships with 5 or 6 *chaloupes* each could be spread around the coast to signal to the English that the French were determined to enforce their rights.⁶⁴ Though the official purpose of these expeditions would be to test whether the provisions of the 1763 Peace were actionable, namely that the French could fish along that shore and maintain summer structures related to processing their catch, Bretel would also benefit from gaining valuable intelligence on the long-forgotten area.⁶⁵ He was, after all, a merchant. The weakness of the post-war French position in the borderland is evident in the phrasing of Bretel's letter to Choiseul which proposed that these fishing ships perform reconnaissance to establish the situation of these harbours, their size and capacity.⁶⁶ The French were claiming an ancient right to fish in harbours they knew nothing about.

The extant documentary record is slight for Notre Dame Bay for the seasons of 1766 and 1767. During this time the British commodore governor at Newfoundland was Hugh Palliser and he concentrated on policing the French fisheries around St. Pierre and Miquelon, as well as the northern fishery along both the eastern and western coasts of the Great Northern Peninsula. A table from 1766 enumerates the French ships and boats

⁶⁴ LAC/BAC C¹²/2 f 3-3v, "Il est proposé par le duc de Choiseul, ministre de la Marine, d'envoyer 3 ou 4 navires à Toulanguet, aux Îles de Fougue et à Bonnaviste...", 25 January 1766; La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 913; Jean-François Brière, *La pêche française en Amérique du Nord au XVIII^e siècle* (St. Laurent, QC: Editions Fides, 1990), 122.

⁶⁵ LAC/BAC C¹²/1 f 130-32, "Rapport sur les relations entre pêcheurs français et anglais depuis 1720 sur les côtes de Terre-Neuve..." 28 February 1765..

⁶⁶ LAC/BAC C¹²/2 f 3-3v, "Il est proposé par le duc de Choiseul, ministre de la Marine, d'envoyer 3 ou 4 navires à Toulanguet, aux Îles de Fougue et à Bonnaviste...", 25 January 1766. La Morandière discusses this expedition: see La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 913.

seized and the circumstances surrounding their infractions. All of the action was in the south around St. Pierre and in the far north.⁶⁷ Palliser's attitude toward the French can be summed up by the postscript to a letter he wrote to the governor of St. Pierre and Miquelon:

...if your people continue to merit a worse Name than that of Barbarians, and under the Specious pretence of Necessity and Distress, offend against the Laws of Hospitality and against what is held most Sacred amongst the Nations the faith of Treaties, and thereby make themselves Publick Disturbances of mankind, causing Perpetual Wars by constantly Encroaching on their Neighbours Rights and Territories, they must expect to be treated accordingly.⁶⁸

Palliser was no blind servant of the Crown, though. His rulings portray him as a man dedicated to applying the rule of law, however much that law was interpreted to advance the British crown. Palliser saw that the English were at fault in many cases, and considered the Poole merchants to be "repugnant" for their occasionally unseemly postwar behaviour in opposition to the French.⁶⁹

The first post-war conflict in Notre Dame Bay to generate a significant volume of documentation involved the Granville captain Pierre Jean De Larue, captain of the *Bon Amis*, at Twillingate in 1768.⁷⁰ De Larue tried to use fishing rooms in Twillingate that he claimed were his by ancient right and under the provisions of Utrecht. De Larue arrived in May, claimed an area of the shore for drying his fish and began setting up his summer

⁶⁷ PRO CO 194/27 f 159v-171, "A List of Vessels and Men, Subjects of France, Taken and Detained..." 1 January 1766.

⁶⁸ PRO CO 194/27 f 142-142v, Governor Hugh Palliser to François-Gabriel D'Angeac, Governor of St. Pierre and Miquelon" 24 October 1765.

⁶⁹ British Library (hereafter BL): Add. MSS. 57,824, Grenville Papers, f 34. Hugh Palliser to Grenville, 23 January 1765.

⁷⁰ PRO CO 194/28 f 36-41 (top), Capt. De Larue to Governor Hugh Palliser, 3 June 1768.

structures. An agent of English merchant Jeremiah Coghlan named Harding ejected De Larue and complained to the fishing admiral for the harbour that year, Thomas Sampson.⁷¹ Sampson ruled that De Larue was acting unreasonably in claiming that the room had been a part of his ship fishery in the past, and sided with Coghlan.⁷² Palliser immediately saw that the key to the issue was whether the site had been occupied at any time since 1713. This was a vital issue: if the French could prove they had fished there in the period since Utrecht, Palliser was prepared to let De Larue claim an annual exclusive berth in that location. He ordered Sampson to clarify De Larue's legal claim to the site, particularly the issue of whether the site had been occupied by any French captains in the period after 1713.⁷³ Sampson replied with the information that De Larue had shifted his location and was peacefully occupying another site. Palliser received Sampson's information and issued a final decree in the matter. De Larue had tried to claim more than one site for himself, probably hoping to receive a bounty from the French government for having advanced French interests in this eastern part of the French Shore. He would be allowed to stay at his new, uncontested location and even leave *chaloupes* in place over the winter. Palliser called on all parties to cease and desist, and refused to

⁷¹ The fishing admiral was the senior English fishing captain in a given harbour each year, a position gained by having been the first substantial captain and trader to arrive in the spring. For a description of this role and its development over time, see Jerry Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals: Law, Custom and Naval Government in Newfoundland, 1699-1832* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 30-32.

⁷² PRO CO 194/28 f 41 (bottom), Thomas Sampson to Govr. Hugh Palliser, 3 [July] 1768.

⁷³ PRO CO 194/28 f 42, Hugh Palliser to Thomas Sampson, 20 July 1768; PRO CO 194/28 f 43, Hugh Palliser to P. J. De la Rue, 20 July 1768.

name De Larue, Harding or Coghlan as being in default of the accepted treaty arrangements for that part of the French-English borderland.⁷⁴ He wrote from St. John's:

... all low arts of avaricious mischevious People on either side for obstructing of prejudicing the Fisheries of the other (by whomsoever arranged) when detected, must, and shall prove vain and ineffectual attempts, whilst such attempts are forbid and discountenanced by both Courts equally.⁷⁵

However, De Larue's small victory belies the larger, significant challenge that faced the French. It would have required dozens of aggressive French captains, all apparently being paid bounties, to make inroads in the entire vast coastal territory from Bonavista up through the borderland to the *Petit Nord*. As will be seen below, heavy volumes of English and Irish passenger and settler inflows during and after the Seven Years' War frustrated De Larue's efforts.

Bretel's report for the following year, 1769, told of French captains being rebuffed at Fogo and moving to Twillingate in the middle of the season. The report indicates clearly that much of the French activity was exploratory in nature. The entry for Fogo includes information on "Tilken" (Tilting), a nearby harbour that French captains were continuing to evaluate but which, as of 1769, had seen no French activity.⁷⁶ The French had one ship at Fogo that year and five at Twillingate but the Fogo ship, the *Concorde* of Granville, moved operations to Twillingate in the face of English harassment. The size of the French effort at Twillingate is significant. In 1769 there

⁷⁴ PRO CO 194/28 f 48-48v, Declaration by Hugh Palliser on Twillingate dispute, 18 Aug 1768.

⁷⁵ RO CO 194/28 f 48v, Declaration by Hugh Palliser on Twillingate dispute, 18 Aug 1768.

⁷⁶ LAC/BAC: Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F/4 f 45 "Extrait des déclarations des capitaines de navires...", 5 February 1770.

were 236 French fishers at Twillingate if the *Concorde* is included. Bretel notes that there were three ships and only eleven English inhabitants at Twillingate in 1769, a significant difference from the 410 residents reported by Governor Byron to the Lords of Trade that year for the harbours of Fogo, "Toulinguet", and Tilting combined. Even if Bretel was only reporting planters and not servants or family members in his usage of the word "habitans," it is likely that he was underreporting the number of English settlers for his own purposes.⁷⁷ In 1769 the British naval governors at Newfoundland also began reporting in detail the state of the French fishery in Newfoundland. Governor Byron reported 234 men in 5 ships for Fogo and Twillingate, the same data as Bretel.⁷⁸

The complicated intercultural atmosphere of Notre Dame Bay was exacerbated by the large number of Irish carried to the region by Benjamin Lester (see Chapter Six). Many Irish also came on their own. They began arriving during and after the Seven Years' War and numbered in the hundreds by 1770. Exact numbers are difficult to gather; la Morandière estimated that in 1763 there were 3,000 English residents north of Bonavista, of which a large part were Irish, but he gave no source for this information. The Scheme of the Fishery for 1770 gave the suspiciously round number of 100 Irish residents for "Fogo, Twillingate, Tilting Harbour and Gander Bay."⁷⁹ This number has value only as a general indicator of the Irish population. Insights into the complexity of ethnic and arguably ethnoreligious dynamics in the borderland can be gleaned from some

⁷⁷ LAC/BAC: Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F/4 f 45 "Extrait des déclarations des capitaines de navires..." 5 February 1770; PRO CO 194/28 f 121, "General Scheme of the Fishery...for 1769," [1770].

⁷⁸ PRO CO 194/28 f 122, "A General Account of the French Fishery...for 1769," [1770].

⁷⁹ PRO CO 194/30 f 7, "A General Scheme of the French Fishery...for the Year 1770," [1771].

of the entries in a journal kept by a *Granvillais* fishing captain, Jacques Hamon, who spent the summer at Greenspond, Bonavista Bay, in 1770.⁸⁰ This journal will be discussed in greater detail below, but is mentioned here for the details it provides on the relationship between the French and Irish in the region, and how they acted in concert to vex the English.

On 22 July 1770, an Irishman referred to as "J.D." sought out Hamon in his cabin to warn him that two English fishermen were planning to beat Hamon up. They had been promised a "feast" to perform the deed. The instigating Englishmen tried to recruit Irishmen into the plot "but most of these replied that, far from wanting to do me any harm, they would either remain neutral or would side with me."⁸¹ In June, another Irishman attended a meeting at which plans were discussed to curtail Hamon's fishing, and this Irishman duly reported his findings to Hamon.⁸² Later in the summer some Irish fishermen on their way into Bonavista Bay from Fogo reported to Hamon that the Fogo merchant Cocklan (Coghlan) was making threatening noises with regard to the French in the area, and that Hamon should be careful.⁸³ Finally, in early August an Irishman told Hamon about another plot against him:

On 4 August, Mr. Brazil, an Irishman, on his way to Fogo with a cargo of merchandise, came to my house to see me and tell me that in

⁸⁰ LAC/BAC: Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F/4 "Journal extraordinaire de J. Hamon, capitaine du navire la Marie-Anne de Granville, armateurs Messieurs Bretel-frères pour l'année 1770," 20 October 1770, f 86-93. I am indebted to Mike Wilkshire of the French and Spanish Department at Memorial University for furnishing me with a copy of his personal translation of Hamon's journal. This item will be cited hereafter as "Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal", paragraph #."

⁸¹ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 19.

⁸² Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 21.

⁸³ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 36.

Bonavista they were making plans to attempt to put us off going there, in the event that we decided to fish there. He said that when the lieutenant told them they had no reason to hold back, they all volunteered to make themselves as much of a nuisance to the French as possible.⁸⁴

Hamon's journal shows a feeling of friendliness between the French and the Irish that stood in contrast to French-English antagonism. A Franco-Irish alliance, however situational, adds an interesting element to the social mix in the area after the war. Was it religion that united the French and Irish in their disdain of the English? Hamon does not specifically mention any religious affinity. What is plain is that in this liminal region where territorial laws were unclear and claims to areas of land and sea were being disputed, alliances based on ethnicity were valued. There is no evidence of direct French-Irish commercial cooperation in the fisheries, such as through the hiring of Irish crews on French fishing expeditions. In fact, Hamon mentions other people helping him, such as the kindly Mr. Clark, whose ethnicity is unclear.⁸⁵ The Irish affinity for the French might have been based in part on the longstanding ties between the southeast of Ireland and the northern Channel ports of Brittany and Normandy.⁸⁶ An Irish sense of alliance with the French remained until recent times a part of the oral cultural tradition of

⁸⁴ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 42.

⁸⁵ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraphs 25, 35, 38-39, 43, 45, 46, 55, 56, 57, 63.

⁸⁶ Mary Ann Lyons, "The emergence of an Irish community in St. Mâlo, 1550-1710," in *The Irish in Europe, 1580-1815*, ed. Thomas O'Connor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001); Louis M. Cullen, "The Irish in Europe, 1580-1815," in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

the Irish in Notre Dame Bay, in the form of songs and recitations.⁸⁷ In the nineteenth century, French fishers hired Irish Newfoundland *gardiens* to watch their shoreward fishing premises and protect them from interloping English and Newfoundland fishermen.⁸⁸ This might be seen as evidence of a longstanding sense of joint interest on the part of the French toward the Irish which had its origins in the early borderland period when French fishers and Irish servants possibly saw their interests as being aligned in opposition to the English.

v. The Greenspond Journal of Capt. Jacques Hamon

Greenspond is an island with an associated fishing harbour, located on the north side of Bonavista Bay opposite the town and port of Bonavista. It was just outside the Notre Dame Bay borderland, situated around the corner from Fogo Island. In the summer of 1770 Capt. Hamon was commissioned by his employer to spend the summer at Greenspond engaging in the dry fishery and challenging the English. Hamon arrived in his ship the *Marie Anne*, owned by Bretel Brothers of Granville, on 30 May.⁸⁹ Hamon diligently recorded many examples of conflict with English fishers that summer, and his attempts to exercise his rights as he interpreted them, to fish in that area. The journal reads like a court statement. This should not surprise; Hamon was no ordinary fishing

⁸⁷ See "Napoleon's Farewell to Paris" in *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*, ed. Kenneth Peacock (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1965), 1009. Peacock collected this song in July 1952 from Mr. Phillip Foley of Tilting.

⁸⁸ Ronald Rompkey, "Sans moyens visibles: Les gardiens terreneuviens et la pêche française," *Annales du Patrimoine de Fécamp* 10 (2003): 67-71.

⁸⁹ LAC/BAC C¹¹F/4 f 86-93, "Journal extraordinaire de J. Hamon." This document is discussed in Michael Wilkshire and Frances Wilkshire, "Alliances and Conflicts on the French Shore: Captain Hamon's Journal, Written in Greenspond in 1770," *Newfoundland Studies* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 147-154.

captain. His work that summer and the resulting journal were part of an ongoing strategy structured by Bretel to test the provisions of both the 1713 and 1763 treaties.⁹⁰ The other reason for the expedition was to gain intelligence on the region of Bonavista and Notre Dame Bays and the practicalities of navigation, moorings, and other matters. Hamon had fished in the area for several years after 1763 and was especially familiar with Fogo, having sent some of his men there *en degat* in the past. He had angered English merchants and planters in both 1768 and 1769 with his insistence on fishing out of harbours where the English had settled.⁹¹ Though the journal does not state this, we can be sure that Hamon was instructed by Bretel to record all his conflicts and to carefully avoid engaging in violence or retaliation. In fact, in the journal, references to the fishing activity of Hamon and his men are so rare as to be surprising when they occasionally arise. Hamon's summer fishing and the resulting, elegant 7,300-word affidavit were both expressions of French imperial strategy. The operation was orchestrated by the *Granvillais* Bretel from Paris, where he sat at the centre of a French legal, naval, imperial/diplomatic and mercantile nexus.

A military tone pervades Hamon's journal. He referred to his "orders" and spent much time gathering intelligence from Greenspond residents.⁹² He made a note to himself about some shoals that needed to be added to French maps.⁹³ On 30 July, Lieut. William Parker of the Royal Navy visited Greenspond in HMS *Niger* as part of his

⁹⁰ LAC/BAC C¹²/2 f 3-3v, "Il est proposé par le duc de Choiseul, ministre de la Marine, d'envoyer 3 ou 4 navires à Toulouquet, aux Îles de Fougue et à Bonnaviste....," 25 January 1766.

⁹¹ La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 915-926.

⁹² Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal" paragraphs 3, 20, 54, 62.

⁹³ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal" paragraph 52.

regular patrol on the French Shore and Hamon's subsequent interview with Parker is particularly telling. Hamon recorded the conversation in some detail, challenged Parker on several key points of the law, and cited some of the provisions in King William's Act, the 1699 legislation which was the first attempt by the British parliament to codify the laws related to the Newfoundland fishery.⁹⁴ Hamon, like Bretel, was apparently well-versed in this legislation and referred to it later in a conversation with a Greenspond resident.⁹⁵ Hamon conducted his matters with strict discipline and did not respond to any acts of violence directed toward his person except in one case, where he slapped an English fisherman when the fisherman insulted him.⁹⁶ Throughout the journal, Hamon portrays himself as one who is prepared to respect British naval authority and law, but who expects that the law will be respected by all.

Beyond the specific information it provides about the practical actions of a French state agent, Hamon's journal provides rich detail on daily life along the French Shore under an unsettled diplomatic regime and where a frontier society was in flux. Legal and police officials appeared only periodically, and between these times there was little rule of law. A form of mob justice could, and did, reign on occasion, directed by English merchants and senior planters. British officials struggled with this new type of commercial territory, where French fishers had rights which seemed in conflict with a wider British program of expansion and domination in the Atlantic world. Bretel, and

⁹⁴ Among other things, King William's Act prohibited common seventeenth century practices such as burning stages and damaging the property of other fishers. The Act had also formalized in law the old English system of fishing admirals. Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals*, 30-32.

⁹⁵ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 33, 56.

⁹⁶ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 18.

through him Hamon, appeared more interested in gathering information and testing laws (and customs) than in catching and drying fish. The journal exposes some of the inherent weaknesses in the French migratory fishery, such as conducting a complicated enterprise within strict, climate-imposed time constraints, and provisioning for the return trip to France in the autumn.⁹⁷ To these longstanding challenges were added the stresses of dealing with aggressively territorial Englishmen, encouraged by merchants, in a region and during a time when the rules of engagement were manifestly unclear.

vi. Intercultural Liminality: Sunday Fishing

The nature of the borderland region as a zone of inter-cultural negotiation was highlighted by a related set of incidents during the 1770 fishing season. In their attempt to rid the borderland of the French, some English planters and merchants appealed to culture, or rather cultural difference, as a means of projecting their territorial claims. The dispute arose over the French practice of fishing on Sunday. As migratory fishers with a limited season within which to work, the French practice had always been to use every fine-weather day to work their berths. The English merchants and planters seized on this issue in 1770 as a way to harass the French fishers. The English might have grown tired of the strict application of French fishing rights during the governorship of Hugh Palliser from 1764 to 1768, and decided to take control of matters. The Twillingate fishing admiral and merchant John Slade ordered that Sunday be observed as the Sabbath and that no fishing be pursued. On 30 June, a petition signed by twenty-five English

⁹⁷ Hamon (Wiltshire), "Journal," paragraphs 62, 63.

residents was presented to the senior French captain at Twillingate, Capt. De Larue. John Slade's signature was on the top. The petition read in part:

...last Sunday to our Surprise! your Boats went out on the Fishing Ground; to Fish &c., without the least Regard or Distinction to y^e Day!...We cannot with Indifference! Behold the same without thinking it a crime of the highest nature not to remark on the same to you...And at the same time Petition your forbearance of the forbidding and Evil Practice in future; so entirely contrary to the Almighty's Commands, the Laws & Customs of our Nation... In whose Country you are & to whose Laws &c. you ought to be Obedient to....⁹⁸

Two weeks after the petition, Capt. De Larue was assaulted while out on the fishing ground on a Sunday, and English fishers boarded his *chaloupes* and threw all the fish into the water. The French complained to British officials and the naval surrogate, Lieut. Parker, ordered Slade to post notices around Twillingate indicating that the French were not to be barred from Sunday fishing.⁹⁹ Parker also wrote to De Larue informing that he would be allowed to fish on Sundays, "agreeable to your custom."¹⁰⁰ Parker and his superior officer Commodore John Byron understood that French traditions allowed for Sunday fishing and approved the activity, even in the face of English merchant hostility. The wording of their petition betrays the true, acquisitive nature of the English objection to French Sabbath fishing. It was less a religious objection than a statement of territorial

⁹⁸ LAC/BAC C¹¹F/4 f 74-74v, "Signed petition of the captains and townsmen requesting Capitaine De Larue to cease fishing cod on Sundays," 30 June 1770.

⁹⁹ LAC/BAC C¹¹F/4 f 73, "Order of the Governor to the local inhabitants forbidding them to interfere with the French fisherman even when they're fishing on Sundays," 8 August 1770; LAC/BAC C¹¹F/4 f 72, "William Parker to Capitaine Pierre-Jean De Larue," 8 August, 1770. The term "naval surrogate" refers to the role as judge and mediator of disputes of the British captain who patrolled a given stretch of coastline. See Bannister, *Rule of the Admirals*, 109-114.

¹⁰⁰ LAC/BAC C¹¹F/4 f 72, "William Parker to Capitaine Pierre-Jean De Larue," 8 August, 1770.

claim. The English fishers appealed to cultural difference as a way to justify the violence they were planning, and they pretended that Sunday fishing was an abomination to them. A further, deeper reading of the document might conclude that one concern on the part of the English fishers was that they viewed the water as containing a limited stock of fish, and that by staying ashore on Sunday while the French fished, there would be less fish available to them.

Interestingly, at the same time that Slade's petition was presented to De Larue, a meeting of English fishers was held in Greenspond to discuss French Sunday fishing and what actions might be taken to prevent it.¹⁰¹ Hamon reported in his journal that the Sunday fishing protests in Twillingate and Greenspond were orchestrated by Jeremiah Coghlan, a merchant and fishing admiral in Fogo. Coghlan had dealt with the French roughly in previous years, and was now boasting that "if everyone had acted as he did, there would be no more French in Twillingate or in Greenspond than there were in Fogo."¹⁰² Hamon gathered intelligence on the Twillingate incident throughout the rest of the summer. On 7 August, he was informed by a friendly contact, Capt. Brixey from Fogo, that indeed De Larue had been harassed and seventy quintals of cod destroyed. On 8 August, Hamon received a letter from De Larue's surgeon, Mr. Laporte-Mignon, who confirmed the assault. Two weeks later Hamon received information that the incident was staged by "Captain Slyde" (Slade). On 23 August, Hamon got good information from a member of De Larue's crew, Mr. Duchesne, who reported that on the day of the attack, English men had gathered from harbours all around Twillingate and when a signal

¹⁰¹ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 43.

¹⁰² Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraph 36.

was given in the form of a shotgun blast, they boarded De Larue's boats, threw the cod overboard, and even threatened to harm some of the French crew.¹⁰³

The conflict over Sunday fishing had been looming for some time. The previous year, Bretel wrote in his annual report for the season that "The French are being forced to defend our practice of Sunday fishing, which is being challenged as an indirect means of making us abandon the Coast of Bonavista." Bretel went on to explain that "the experts in canon law that the *armateurs* have consulted" had ruled that Sunday fishing was permitted. The Anglicans, he said, were "slaves to the letter of the law" and "must submit to this authority, and obey." The Catholic religion on the other hand considered the spirit of the law and in some cases made dispensation for working on Sunday, he wrote. Bretel also framed his defence in legal terms, noting that King William's Act made no provisions for preventing French fishers from practicing their religion, and that "particularly in terms of spiritual affairs, the French are independent of the English government."¹⁰⁴ Hamon and De Larue were thus armed with both temporal and canonical legal opinions when their practice of Sunday fishing was challenged the following year.

The incident tells us much about French-English conflict in the borderland. We see the French and the English communicating within their own societies through letters and meetings, with actions planned by senior operators like Coghlan and Hamon. During the fishing season there was constant movement through the region and beyond, and

¹⁰³ Hamon (Wilkshire), "Journal," paragraphs 35, 37, 43, 47.

¹⁰⁴ LAC/BAC C11F/4 f 53v-54, "Extrait des déclarations des capitaines de navires...", 5 February 1770. Translated by Allan Dwyer.

news was carried and shared constantly. The region was not lawless, but it did lack in an established rule of law to account for the contingencies of a concurrent fishery in an inter-imperial and inter-cultural borderland. English merchants and planters were expanding their economic territory with the expectation that they were supported by a naval/legal establishment and a body of diplomatic and legal precedent. When that did not seem sufficient, they invoked "the Almighty Power."¹⁰⁵ French fishing captains in the region were instruments of French state strategy and were mandated to test French treaty claims and to gather practical information for the hoped-for day when a peaceful, regulated seasonal fishery could be practiced in Notre Dame and Bonavista Bays.

vii. Jean Conan's Borderland

Though the borderland event might be seen to have ended in 1783 with the French surrendering their rights there, the borderland continued to exert its influence on the lives of French fishermen even after that date. On June 14, 1787, Jean Conan, a weaver and occasional fisherman from Brittany, was shipwrecked in the early summer ice of Notre Dame Bay. Conan and the other survivors of the wreck made their way to shore and while trying to catch some fish to eat, they were set upon by a party of Natives, almost certainly Beothuk, who threw rocks at them. They fled the Natives in a small boat and were picked up by an English fishing ship that took them into Fogo Harbour, where they stayed for six weeks, and where they were fed and cared for. At Fogo, Conan was surprised to see that the English residents were so afraid of the surrounding Beothuk

¹⁰⁵ LAC/BAC C11F/4 f 74, "Signed petition of the captains and townsmen requesting Capitaine De Larue to cease fishing cod on Sundays," 30 June 1770.

population that they posted guards with dogs abroad in the town every night. Eventually, an English captain offered to land the French sailors near the harbour of La Scie, where they met with a second group of Natives who welcomed the Bretons into their camp and fed them. Upon reaching La Scie, the Bretons found work in the French fishery and met a third group of Natives later in the summer, on the *Petit Nord*. The Frenchmen were rescued by this party of Natives who threw ropes to them when the fishers' boat was in danger of being wrecked in a storm. Conan spent some time with these Natives as well, and noted that some of the women wore European clothing and took weekly trips to nearby Saint Julien to visit with the French fishing captains stationed there.

We know the details of Conan's adventures in the summer of 1787 because he recorded them as part of an epic biographical poem he composed in Breton, the Celtic language of Brittany, entitled *Aventurio ar Citoien Jean Conan a Voengamb*.¹⁰⁶ Only recently translated into French, the text is a rare early modern description of a French fisherman's experiences at Newfoundland. Despite its poetic embellishments, Conan's adventures in and among islands of both ice and rock provide important information regarding the types of experiences that Notre Dame Bay offered French fishermen in the eighteenth century. The borderland was a place of treacherous navigation, omnipresent Native bands, and armed English settlers with dogs. Despite the events in the poem occurring in 1787, four years after the French surrendered the Bay in return for fishing

¹⁰⁶ Bernard Cabon et al., eds. *Les Aventures de Citoyen Jean Conan de Guingamp: Aventurio ar Citoien Jean Conan a Voengamb* (Morlaix, Fr: Editions Skol Vreizh, 1990). Peter Bakker and Lynn Drapeau analyzed the poem and its references to Natives. See Peter Bakker and Lynn Drapeau, "Adventures with the Beothuks in 1787: A Testimony from Jean Conan's Autobiography," in *Actes du Vingt-Cinquième Congrès Des Algonquistes*, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992), 32-45.

rights elsewhere in the face of continued Atlantic losses, we see the land and waters around Fogo as an interethnic borderland where French and English fishers continued to compete with one another and together competed with indigenous Beothuk residents for resources. Conan's experience of Beothuk Natives and English settlers as being on guard against one another typifies the tone of life in the Bay in the latter years of the eighteenth century, as revealed in contemporary British and French colonial documents.

Notre Dame Bay, and it could be argued the Newfoundland fisheries as a whole, had an important but derivative value to wider French imperial strategies. This value was only actualized in treaty negotiations when existential threats to the French Atlantic threw the role of the fisheries as a naval training ground into sharp relief. This is not to deny that the fisheries had a very real investment value to merchant shipowners like the Bretel family of Granville. Overall, though, there is no sense in the French documentary record that the French ships that engaged in the seasonal dry fishery in northern Newfoundland were directly linked to wider networks of Atlantic trade, or that the fishermen themselves were circum-Atlantic travelers in the way some English fishermen, and merchants, were. The vast majority of the sailors in the *Roles d'inscription* at the Cherbourg naval archives only got to see something of the world beyond the Granville-*Petit Nord* or Granville-St. Pierre axes when the ships with which they served went to war.

In any case, there should be no reason to expect an equivalence of experience between French and English Newfoundland fishers in the eighteenth century. For the French, the borderland was a known area of ice, *sauvages*, and belligerent Englishmen and it was ultimately expendable during a century of serial territorial and strategic losses

in the Atlantic. The Newfoundland English commitment to place, flowing as it did from the economic requirement to acquire physical territory to persecute the fishery, was stronger than any similar requirement on the part of the migratory French. Linked to multiple webs of Atlantic commerce, trade and credit and supported by a full time British navy, the English settled fishery at Newfoundland had deep social, economic and legal roots holding it in place. In its turn, Notre Dame Bay became the focus of British imperial expansion. For the English, the region was far more than a simple fishing ground: it was the northernmost tip of greater New England.

Chapter Four

The Borderland: First English Approaches

i. Introduction

According to family history and local tradition, Thomas Tizzard was the first European to settle in the Beothuk bioregion of Notre Dame Bay. He is said to have sailed from Bonavista Harbour in 1732 with his wife and family.¹ Other documents point to a slightly earlier arrival, unnamed, in Fogo Harbour in 1728.² The 1713 Utrecht treaty had precipitated a change in the perspective of fishers and trappers on the northernmost tip of the English Shore. By explicitly restricting French activity north of Bonavista to summer fishing visits only, the treaty served to attract the attention of Englishmen who had previously stayed away through fear of the French or concerns about the Beothuk and difficult navigation in the Bay. C. Grant Head theorized that a period of weak returns in the English Shore fishery, in conjunction with population pressures there, also compelled the English to push north into ostensibly French waters.³ After 1713, Notre Dame Bay rapidly emerged as a new type of borderland diplomatic and commercial zone, where both French and English could fish concurrently (See Figure 3.1). The English had a commercial advantage, however, because they had men among them who spent their

¹ Aubrey Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications, 1979), ix.

² C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A Geographer's Perspective* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 61n8. Head cites the Archives of the National Maritime Museum, record group GRV, Papers of Thomas Graves, item number 106, "Geo Davis, Poole, to James Cook, 1764."

³ Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 56-57.

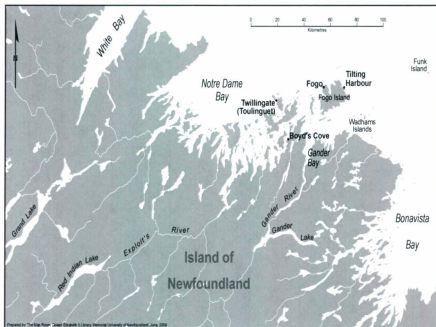


Figure 3.1 The Borderland

winters furring and harvesting wood at Newfoundland, men who could claim good territory while the French were away.

For the Beothuk the diplomatic changes wrought by Utrecht, specifically the sudden transformation of longstanding patterns of European economic activity in the Bay, required immediate adaptation. They stopped using the Boyd's Cove camp and began to refashion their archipelagic economy into one based around woodland resources. The Beothuk experienced Utrecht through the sudden arrival of English entrepreneurs: inner coastal salmon catchers and outer coastal seal fishers. The peaceful period of benign iron harvesting gave way to a time of resistance, sometimes violent, to English incursions into their territory.

ii. "The French have harbours in the North..."

A map produced by the French at the time of the Utrecht treaty indicates that they viewed the entire borderland region as being exclusive French territory (see Figure 3.2). Maps and documents published in the last years of the seventeenth and first years of the eighteenth centuries show a sense of English curiosity about the northern land and seascapes of Newfoundland, coupled with an almost total lack of knowledge of the physical layout of the region. Maps of the period indicated only a rudimentary English understanding of the hydrography of the north of the island, with both Bonavista and Notre Dame Bays portrayed as murky, island-studded danger zones. The English did understand, though, that the French were on the move in the north. In 1675, as part of a wider petition to the Council of Charles II arguing for a settled government at Newfoundland, George Pley warned that "the French have harbours in the

North at the Bays of Foggs...."⁴ This is a reference to one of the early cartographic names for Notre Dame Bay. The Williamson map from 1677 conflates "B. Norterdam" and "B. Foggs" as a single feature and highlights the fact that at that date, official Britain had little knowledge of the region above Bonavista (see Figure 3.3).⁵ Even as late as 1740, for example, maps showed the region of Notre Dame Bay with only one feature noted: I. d'Aves or Funk Island (see Figure 3.4).

In addition to the strong suspicion that the French were established in key harbours north of Cape Freels, there were two other reasons why late seventeenth-century English fishers settled no further north than the neighbourhood of Bonavista-Salvage, with a tentative station at the old French harbor of Grin d'Espagne (Greenspond). The worrying presence of the Beothuk and the difficulty of navigation in Notre Dame Bay were additional problems for the English. The annual reports from the senior naval officer at Newfoundland to the Lords of Trade and Plantations contain references to these three concerns throughout the last two decades of the seventeenth century. In 1680,

⁴ W. Noel Sainsbury, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1675-1676, and Addenda, 1574-1674. Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, [1890]), 185.

⁵ The National Archives of the United Kingdom: Public Record Office (PRO) Colonial Office (CO) Series 199/piece 16, "Description and Map of Newfoundland," 1677. Sir Joseph Williamson was the Secretary of State for the Northern Department, 1674 to 1679. The map is also described in W. Noel Sainsbury and J.W. Fortescue, eds., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1677-1680, Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1896), 155.

Captain Sir Robert Robinson of the *Assistance* noted that the French fished to the north of Bonavista with the "Biscayans" (Basques).⁶ In 1684 the Naval Commodore Capt. Francis Wheler was more specific, noting that the French fishery began about ten leagues to the north of Bonavista. His description of the area above Bonavista speaks of the twin dangers, in the minds of English naval officials and likely of merchants and fishers as well, of French fishers and dangerous Natives. Concerning French activity in the region, he wrote:

Being at utter defiance with the Indians in those parts they do not stay for the winter, and all the summer have their arms by them. They have a large fleet and twenty armed boats on the Coast to guard against the Indian canoes; any man of whatever nation who pays his proportion of this expense may fish on the coast.⁷

Official communications at the turn of the eighteenth century give the impression of accelerated growth in English interest in the region above Bonavista. In 1697 John Gibson, in reporting French activity during the recent war, described Bonavista as "the Northmost plantation."⁸ By 1699, however, Greenspond appeared in the annual report to The Lords of Trade in London, the "Heads of Inquiry." In that year the harbour was represented by a single fishing ship registered as having based itself in the harbour. The ship was the *Willingmind* of London, Patrick Wheeler master, one hundred tons with nine

⁶ Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, 1677-1680*, 602, "Sir Robert Robertson to the Lords of Trade and Plantations," 16 September 1680.

⁷ J. W. Fortescu, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1681-1685. Preserved in the Her Majesty's Public Record Office* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898), 709.

⁸ PRO CO 194/1 f 193, Colonel Gibson to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 23 June 1697.

guns. Greenspond hosted thirty-two residents, three stages and three planters' boats.⁹

This is a substantial population and the data imply that though the settlement is invisible in official documents prior to 1699, English settlement had crept across Bonavista Bay.

As part of his report, Captain Leake wrote the following:

By what I have heard from severall hands that our Bay of Bonavista affords many secure Harbours for shipping. I had an Order from the Rt Honble the Lords of the Admiralty to take a survey of that Bay. I coming so late into the country wanting tyme to put their Lordships Order in execution, I'm inform'd that it is the best Land on the Island; I don't doubt but their Lordships will take it into consideration and send a Small Vessel Early the next yeare on that servis. It is a Large Track of Land and will require at Least three months tyme to take a Compleat Survey thereof; there being a great number of Rocks in the said Bay.¹⁰

William Cock wrote in 1698 that the north side of Bonavista Bay around Greenspond offered "many extraordinary harbours and better fishing."¹¹ Cock highlighted the danger of navigation in the region by pressing the need for a proper hydrographic survey.

Commodore Graydon's 1701 report on French activity at Newfoundland estimated that the French had fourteen ships in Notre Dame Bay each year, and that each ship was worked by eight "boats" or *chaloupes*.¹² This computes to 560 men, assuming the standard of five workers per boat. Graydon went on to describe the problems the French were having with the "Newfoundland Indians" and described the French practice of

⁹ PRO CO 194/1 f 345, Captain Leake to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, Heads of Enquiry, 12 April 1699.

¹⁰ PRO CO 194/1 f 150, Captain Leake to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 17 September 1699.

¹¹ J. W. Fortescu, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1681-1685. Preserved in the Her Majesty's Public Record Office* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905), 552.

¹² PRO CO 194 194/2 f 179, Commodore John Graydon, "An Accoⁿ of the French fishing upon the NE Coast of Newfoundland," 13 March 1701.

leaving a guard boat, presumably a patrol, in each of their northern harbours in order to protect them from Natives.

The Beothuk were the third concern for the English. Their presence in the region has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Until the final retreat of the Beothuk to the Exploits River headwaters late in the eighteenth century, the large, wide peninsula that separates Bonavista Bay from Notre Dame Bay was an integral part of Beothuk economic territory. The Beothuk sites at The Beaches (DeAk-2) and Fox Bar (DeAk-3) were suitably hidden from the large numbers of coasting fishermen in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The Beothuk bands that used these locations were able to practice their economy at relatively close quarters to European settlers, as the Boyd's Cove Beothuk band did. As late as 1705 Bonavista Harbour itself was receiving visits by Beothuk. In that year Mr. John Roope wrote to the Lords that "att Buena Vista they were so a[n]noyed by y^e Indians in y^e fishing season y^l they are allmost utterly ruined."¹³ As with the Boyd's Cove band, who seem to have left the area around 1720, the Bonavista Bay group were last seen in the region around 1720:

The furr taken and cured last year by our Planters at Bonavist amounts to Two Thousand pounds, which with the Oyle was sent to England. They have no commerce with the Indians, who are a Savage people, not as yet acquainted with the use of Guns, In the Summer Season they come to the Southward, have been seen near Bonavista. In the winter they go further Northward in Canoose, made of Birch Rinds, which they sowe together with the Sinnews of Bucks, and [pay] the Seam's with Franksinsence.¹⁴

¹³ As with Fogo/Whego, note the Spanish/Portuguese use of the word for Bonavista. PRO CO 194/3 f 307, Mr. John Roope to the Lords of Trade, [Late 1705].

¹⁴ PRO CO 194/7 f 6, Commander Percy to the Lords of Trade, "Heads of Enquiry," 8 October 1720. For a discussion of the dating of the Beaches Beothuk site, see Laurie

This was the last mention of Natives in the Bonavista Bay region in the extant British colonial records, and it confirms that the first Europeans to penetrate the Beothuk heartland in a sustained fashion were English fur trappers.

iii. The Furriers

In 1703 a Mr. Richards from St. John's wrote to the Earl of Nottingham detailing, among other things, that an expedition of six soldiers and three furriers had been sent to the "Norward" from Bonavista to gain intelligence on French activity in the area.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that a number of fur trappers were recruited to go along with the soldiers on this reconnaissance voyage. The early sources on Newfoundland depict furriers as independent operators who, uncharacteristically for coastwise fishermen, were able to travel easily through the backcountry in winter and were aware of environmental conditions and risks. The expedition Richards writes of would have increased its chances of success by including some of these savvy land travelers to guide the soldiers in their military work. Roope noted in 1705 that "The People of Buena Vista doe also in Winter goe to ye North some 100 Leagues to hunt and take good furr &c."¹⁶ There would have been no more than several dozen such trappers working in the Bonavista and Notre Dame Bay hinterlands at any one time in the period under consideration. There are no records of the Newfoundland furriers having had any direct contact with the local Beothuk inhabitants. Still, the trappers gathered knowledge of the landscape and seasons, the

McLean, "Back to the Beaches: New Data Pertaining to the Early Beothuk in Newfoundland," *Northeast Anthropology* 47 (Spring 1994): 71-86.

¹⁵ PRO CO 194/22 f 12, Mr. Richards to the Earl of Nottingham, 20 May 1703.

¹⁶ PRO CO 194/3 f 308, Mr. John Roope to the Lords of Trade, [Late 1705].

watershed and the available faunal resources. They learned enough of the rudiments of boreal forest life to successfully prosecute a fur hunt for the last quarter of the seventeenth century and much of the eighteenth.

The Newfoundland furriers were a unique group in the panoply of early modern Atlantic labouring orders. The Beothuk had decided not to trade with Europeans, a rare occurrence in North American Native economic behaviour. In the absence of the traditional source of peltry, therefore, a small number of English winter workers began to harvest furs themselves. These were Englishmen who had been left behind to guard northward fishing premises and gather wood supplies for the fishery. The English worker-trappers also processed the furs for shipment to England. They were the first entrepreneurs to realize that the northern bioregion of the island of Newfoundland offered commodity regimes, in abundance, beyond the dried-and-salted cod fishery of the old English Shore.

The little harbour at Salvage was the true northern limit of the settled English fishery and was a centre of furring activity. Though it is situated 40 kilometres due west of Bonavista, Salvage is past Bonavista in practical terms and was probably considered by English mariners of the day as the northernmost limit of English influence in North America. Though Capt. James Story reported the presence of resident families there, as well as in nearby Keels, in 1681, Salvage should best be viewed as an outpost or satellite of Bonavista, the latter serving as a regional service centre.¹⁷ Story's unofficial census

¹⁷ Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 317. The word "Salvage" is the Middle English version of "savage" and likely highlights the presence of the Beothuk,

confirms that in 1681 Salvage had a population of 67 people: 7 planters, 4 of whom had wives, 12 children and 44 servants. Each planter operated a single boat except for one man, who had two. It was a significant northern community, and it operated year-round: Story also implied in a note that the principal activity of these northern people was to engage in winter furring.¹⁸ Within a few years of Story's 1681 census, the important printed navigation guide, *The English Pilot*, included sailing instructions into Salvage, the northernmost such entry for the English Atlantic.¹⁹ Story wrote that the residents of Salvage and environs lived mostly "by furring in ye winter being all together in the woods for the space of seven months."²⁰ This corresponds roughly to the period in which Newfoundland is entombed in winter. The motif of northern furriers, based around Bonavista and engaging in a mixed commodity extraction regime, is continued in British colonial documents through the last decades of the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth. The economy of the northern borderland region differed from the old core English Shore in an important respect: in these early fur trappers we see the execution of a variegated strategy that would ultimately encompass furs, salmon and seals in addition to cod. It was a different kind of Newfoundland fishery when compared to the ancient

who visited the region until their final eighteenth-century retreat to the interior. Salvage comes from the Late Latin term *salvaticus*, meaning a man of the woods.

¹⁸ Memorial University of Newfoundland, Maritime History Archive (MHA), Keith Matthews Collection, 16-D-1-006, Capt. James Story, "An account of what fishing ships, Sack Ships, Planters and boat keepers from Trepasse to Bonavist and from thence to Faire Island the Northward part of Newfoundland," 1 September 1681. This document in the Maritime History Archives is a photocopy of PRO CO 1/47 ff 113-121v.

¹⁹ John Thornton, ed., *The English Pilot, The Fourth Book* (1689, repr. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1967), 19, 21.

²⁰ MHA-16-D-1-006, f 121v, Capt. James Story, "An account of what fishing ships, Sack Ships, Planters and boat keepers from Trepasse to Bonavist and from thence to Faire Island the Northward part of Newfoundland," 1 September 1681.

cod trade prosecuted in Trinity and Conception Bays and down the eastern side of the Avalon Peninsula.

In 1698 Captain Norris, in his annual report to the Lords of Trade on the operation of the fishery, included a new heading on the omnibus data table entitled "No. of Boats sent a Furring this winter." Of the total of twenty boats engaged in the fur hunt that year, twelve were from the Bonavista area, including nine from Bonavista and one from Salvage, and the balance were all from three contiguous settlements in Trinity Bay: Hant's Harbour, New Perlican and Silly Cove.²¹ In the accompanying letter to the Lords, Norris wrote in response to a query on winter activity at Newfoundland that "The Country affords no sustenance to the Planters but a few fowls in Winter, and at Bonavista they have a small gain in furs."²² The gain may have been small, but it was sustained. It appears that the Bonavista fur hunt, in the absence of a full commercial relationship with local resident Natives as existed in other parts of North America, remained the persistent occupation of a small number of specialist planters who had learned how to round out the year's economic activity by working inland trap lines. The French had no better luck trading furs with the Beothuk than did the English. In 1701 Commodore Graydon allowed that the French had an active fur trade with the "Canada Indians" who came across the straights from Labrador to trade with the French for guns, but that the French had no trade with the "Newfoundland Indians." In this passage, Graydon also notes that

²¹ PRO CO 194/1 f 262, Capt. Norris, "An Abstract of the Planters and Boat Keepers and what Voyages they have this Year in Newfoundland 1698, 27 September 1698."

²² PRO CO 194/1 f 267v, Capt. Norris to the Lords of Trade, "An Answer to the Heads directed by the Lords Commis^s of the Council of Trade in Relation to Newfoundland," 13 November 1698.

there is a "great hatred between the Canada Indians and the [Newfoundland] Indians."²³ His comments stand in contrast to recent scholarship which proposes that the Beothuk should be viewed as having been a part, however tentative, of regional native trade and social groupings, especially with regard to Labrador.²⁴

In a rare bit of detail, Captain Passenger told the Lords of Trade in 1718 that beaver furs were being procured by some residents in the winter, though not through trade with the Indians.²⁵ Captain Ogle took the time in 1719 to write a long cover letter with his annual report to the Lords of Trade. It said in part:

The furring trade this last year prov'd of very good advantage to the Inhabitants of Bonavist many persons having taken the value of forty pounds Sterling [per] man for the winters Season, all the furs so taken is sent to Great Britain by the Poole and Lymington ships [using] that trade. The Seal Fishery to the Northward is likewise of very great advantage and greatly encouraged by the said Mr. Keen who yearly purchases all of that commodity and sends for Great Britain. Its to be hoped that in a few years the Inhabitants will be Capable (especially those at the Northward) to make the voyage of Furring and Seal Fishing more to their advantage than the Cod fishing has been for many years, and indeed if it were not for those helps it would be impossible for so many poor people to live for the flesh or rather the fish of the said Seal serves them instead of English provisions.²⁶

Ogle understood that there were new types of opportunities up beyond the northern limits of the English fishery, opportunities that the French appeared not to have grasped.

²³ PRO CO 194/2 f 180, Capt. Graydon to the Lords of Trade, "An Accoⁿ of the French fishing upon the NE Coast of Newfoundland," 13 March 1701. The term *beaver* may have been simply a generic term for furs of all types.

²⁴ M.A.P. Renouf, "Prehistory of Newfoundland Hunter Gatherers: Extinctions or Adaptations?" *World Archaeology* 30, no. 3 (1999): 403-420.

²⁵ PRO CO 194/6 f 251, "An Answer to the Hon^{ble} the Lords Commis^{rs} of Trade and Plantations in relation to the trade and inhabitants of Newfoundland," 16 July 1718.

²⁶ PRO CO 194/6 f 312, Captain Ogle to W^m Popple, Secretary, Board of Trade, 13 October 1719.

Innovative merchants like the Mr. Keen mentioned in Ogle's note adapted their Atlantic business systems to encompass the trade of newly available resources, seals in this case, in northern geographies. Around 1720 the nature of the English fur hunt changed on several fronts. First, a form of actual, though limited, fur *trade* seems to have evolved in the years after the Utrecht treaty with Native groups other than the Beothuk and in areas outside the borderland. This was a source of excitement for English officials and entrepreneurs alike. In addition to this, English entrepreneurs took full advantage of their newfound legal freedoms in the newly created borderland. In 1720 Captain Percy wrote in his reply to the Heads of Enquiry that:

The French fish in the Northern parts of this Land, but don't reside there all the Winter, nor build houses, neither do they come from any other parts to hunt for Furr, but there are a sort of French Indians who take a Considerable quantity of Furr in the winter and Sell to our trading People.²⁷

The most likely interpretation of this piece of intelligence is that the "French Indians" were the Labrador-based Montagnais (Innu), who were active traders and readily mobile. The procurement by the English of furs through trade was also a new development. This tantalizing evidence of a Newfoundland-based fur trade, however, stands within the larger context of a decline in the Bonavista-based fur hunt in general. By 1723 the obligatory annual question in the Heads of Enquiry from the Lords of Trade to the Naval Commander on the status of any furring activity garnered only the most cursory of comments: "No Furrs taken but at Bonavista and to the North of that place."²⁸ In 1727

²⁷ PRO CO 194/7 f 10, Captain Percy to the Lords of Trade," 8 October 1720.

²⁸ PRO CO 194/8 f 208v, Capt. Cayley, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry, 11 October 1723.

the situation had clarified somewhat. The annual report to the Lords for that year distinguished between permanent residents and dedicated fur hunters. It specified that the “inhabitants” of the region were not participating in the fur hunt, but that several other people were still engaged in the hunt on an apparent specialist basis:

There are sev:^{ll} persons that stay behind at Trinity bay, Bonavista, Old [Perlican] and Carboneir that Employ themselves in furring During the Winter but few of the Inhabitants employ themselves this Way nor is there any Traffick wth the Indians[.] This last year they took Furrs to the Value of 880 Pounds by the acc^t they give themselves but there is no Ways of Coming at a true acc^t what they take --²⁹

In the period after 1730, entries related to furring in the annual report to the Lords declined significantly. In 1738 Governor VanBrugh implied that only a small hunt was being prosecuted by inhabitants and that there was no trade with the Indians.³⁰ In 1741 Captain Smith reported a small fur hunt with a value of £880, suspiciously the same as the value reported in 1727, indicating the probable repetition of information from previous statistical tables by commodores or their clerks.³¹ The fur hunt was losing its luster by the 1740s. In 1743 John Masters petitioned the Admiralty to take a more serious approach to fortifying the coast of Newfoundland from the French. He wrote, in part,

Our own People that fish at Fogo, Twilingate and Bonavista are very good Pilots that Way, the former Places are within 10 Leagues of the French Fisheries, and in the Winter a great Number of our People

²⁹ PRO CO 194/8 f 156, Commodore Bowler, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry, 16 October 1727.

³⁰ PRO CO 194/10 f 95v, Governor Philip Vanbrugh to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 6 November 1738.

³¹ PRO CO 194/11 f 50v, Thomas Smith to the Lords of Trade, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry, 19 December 1741.

from the above Places live at the French fishing Places in order to catch Furs & Seals and are able to give a good Description of that Coast and Harbours.³²

This confirms that some early English settlers in the Notre Dame Bay borderland conducted winter fur and spring seal hunts from coastal fishing stations that were otherwise claimed by the migratory French. It also shows that the fur hunt was related to the important seal fishery which developed in the middle years of the eighteenth century and became a major factor in the peopling of the Fogo-Twillingate region.³³ The mechanics of settlement likely proceeded in the early 1730s and 1740s in a fashion that saw English hunters using French harbours in the winter as bases for furring and sealing before retreating to their principal harbours in English territory for the summer cod fishery. It would have required only a slight change of strategy for the peripatetic English winter hunters to elect to stay in the French harbours come May and June, especially after a merchant structure was established in the region, providing trade infrastructure in the form of shipping facilities and access to trade goods.

In 1732 Commander Falkingham wrote that the fur trade to the north was “not so advantageous has heretofore.” Falkingham described a fatal conflict in that year between furriers and “Indians.”³⁴ There had been other instances of Beothuk-English violence, notably in 1721, but the 1732 clash reads like an attack on the Beothuk. The incident, in which several Indians were “destroyed,” marks another key point in the decline of the fur trade. Fur trapping died out mainly because by the late 1720s the expansion of English

³² PRO CO 194/12 ff 1-2, John Masters to the Lords of the Admiralty, 6 September 1743.

³³ Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 74-77.

³⁴ PRO CO 194/9 f 214v, Captain Falkingham to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry, 4 October 1732.

influence into Notre Dame Bay, with the concurrent departure of the French from the eastern precincts of the Bay in 1718, resulted in the establishment of the formal salt-dried cod trade, which obviated the need for additional sources of income. It can also be proposed that intense furring in the decades prior to 1720 led to a stress on populations of furbearing animals that resulted in declines in available numbers within the accessible winter orbits of the population centres of Bonavista and Salvage.³⁵ In addition, the growth of salmon operations on rivers in the region, and the deaths in 1729 of English salmon workers appear to have created a climate of fear in the region, thus curbing any overly ambitious inland winter travel. While some rudimentary, opportunistic furring was carried on in the borderland area until the end of the eighteenth century, the fur hunt as a *raison d'être* for year-round residence, as we saw for Salvage in 1681, had dissipated. The new, labour-intensive borderland salmon industry likely absorbed those non-resident workers who preferred land-based enterprise, as opposed to ocean fishing for cod and, in the spring of the year, seals.

A remaining question surrounds the numbers of men who might have been engaged in furring activity. The English records are frustratingly unclear on the issue. Fur trapping and hunting at Newfoundland appear in official reports to be ancillary activities for residents and perhaps a handful of specialized artisan-hunters, but the activities are strangely, suspiciously, persistent, lasting from the earliest days of English official record-keeping in Newfoundland, the 1670s, until the final third of the eighteenth

³⁵ Ralph Pastore and James Tuck highlighted the fragility of Newfoundland's mammalian species in James Tuck and Ralph Pastore, "A Nice Place to Visit... Prehistoric Human Extinctions on the Island of Newfoundland," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 9, no. 1 (1985): 69-80.

century. The problem may be with the English records themselves: they do not tell the entire story. Perhaps competitive English fishing masters and boatkeepers were hesitant to inform curious naval officials of the extent of any lucrative but easily concealed ancillary trade to the cod fishery, such as fur-trapping. Still, the issue loomed large enough for the Board of Trade that it began questioning Newfoundland naval station commodores in the relatively early year of 1677 on the extent of furring activity, by way of the annual Heads of Enquiry. Historians of Newfoundland have too often depended on the English record, and ignored French testimony on this and other matters. Abbé Baudoin, for example, insisted in 1697 that there were two hundred English fur hunters at Newfoundland in the 1690s and that they knew the island well, better than the French: "Ils sont plus de deux cents chasseurs anglais qui passent tous les hyvers dans les bois, qui y tuent castor, loutre, cerf et ours, en un mot toutes les bestes sauvages de Cette isle: ces chasseurs sont à la vérité bons tireurs et marchent assez bien..."³⁶ It is noteworthy that Baudoin used the word "chasseurs" (hunters) for the English furriers at Newfoundland. He was clearly aware that the English were not trading for furs but rather were procuring them through trapping. This gives weight to his remarks and indicates that the figure of two hundred English furriers may be credible. The fur processing industry in England thrived throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially after the Hudson Bay land grant began to provide a steady stream of good product into English ports and warehouses. There would have been strong demand for

³⁶ Alan F. Williams, *Father Baudoin's War: D'Iberville's Campaigns in Acadia and Newfoundland: 1696, 1697* (St. John's, NL: Department of Geography, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987), 190. Williams transcribed the Baudoin journal from Library and Archives Canada, *Archives des Colonies*, C¹¹d, 5/170.

Newfoundland furs throughout the period under study. The lack of narrative evidence in English records of extensive fur outflows should not be taken as evidence of a weak industry

iv. The Salmon Fisheries

Early explorers in Newfoundland sought out salmon rivers. In 1534, Cartier visited French fishing grounds around the north of the island, and made note of significant salmon populations in Shecatika Bay, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence in what is now Québec. Given the migratory nature of their activity on the *Petit Nord*, the French were not able to harvest the spring salmon migration. As well, the more rigid occupational structure of the French fishery did not allow for the early inner coastal exploration and experimentation that salmon catching required.

During the first century or so of the migratory English cod fishery, it is unlikely that the salmon resource caught the attention of English fishing adventurers or their servants. It was only in the eighteenth century when a growing resident population began to explore the inner coast of the northern parts of the island and Labrador and noted the presence of salmon pools in the springtime. Importantly, the growth of early eighteenth-century interest in salmon is closely associated with the activity of furriers who, as part of their backcountry explorations, identified the location of salmon rivers.

The gear requirements for the salmon fishery did not significantly overlap with those of the monolithic cod fishery. This is important because whereas the seal fishery could be integrated temporally, occupationally, and in terms of capital gear, into the massive Atlantic cod fishery, the salmon trade was an enterprise which, despite its

limited prosecution in the north of the British Isles and Scandinavia, was only a small fraction of the size of the cod trade. The processing of salmon was simple: unlike cod handling, which was characterized by a degree of locational unpredictability, the salmon came to the fishers in a satisfyingly predictable way. Salmon pools were identified on the tributaries of the big rivers and weirs and dams were constructed to trap the migrating fish, at which point they were dipped out of the water with hand-nets or gathered with seines. The fish were then headed, gutted, washed and placed in barrels of brine. The principal consumable inputs to the salmon fisheries, then, were salt, rope, and lumber for weirs, huts, and cooperage.

The labour component of salmon catching and processing was not as considerable as that required for the cod fishery. The workers lived in cabins and tilts at the location of production. In general, the camps were small affairs with an average of three men in place, using a single rowboat and operating with a combination of salmon nets and weirs.³⁷ There was no punishing daily trip to the fishing grounds. The salmon trade did not require the extensive salting, washing, and monitoring of the drying fish product that the cod trade did. Salmon processing was essentially a one-stage activity. However, since the salmon were not dried and were, in turn, loaded into barrels of brine, it was a less efficient enterprise in terms of cargo weight per unit of return. There were other activities related to the upkeep of the salmon operation, such as replacing damaged or weathered weirs and cabins, that occupied part of the time of the workers, especially at the beginning of the season.

³⁷ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 237.

Still, pursuit of the salmon fishery drew Europeans into the ecological and economic orbit of the Beothuk in a way that the limited fur hunt or the cod fishery had not. The salmon, in their abundance, dietary value, and predictable seasonality, appear to have figured more prominently in the Beothuk spiritual system than small fur bearers. As a boreal people, the Beothuk depended more on the arrival of species at predicted times in certain places than other Native peoples south of the Great Lakes, and the three principal species in the Beothuk economy, the salmon, the seal, and later the caribou, were all highly seasonal in their movements and life cycles. In their practice of salmon catching, Europeans left considerable amounts of fish refuse at the sites of their salmon camps when the season ended. This stands in contrast to Pastore's finding that the Beothuk at Boyd's Cove saved much of their refuse animal and fish bones in a single enclosure. This supports the speculation that the Beothuk, like other Amerindian peoples, viewed animal foods with a sense of reverence that even extended to the disposal of waste products.³⁸

English interest in the salmon trade commenced shortly before the turn of the eighteenth century. A report to London from 1706 notes that there was a "noble salmon fishery" at Greenspond.³⁹ Salmon was mentioned in the omnibus statistical report to the Lords of Trade for the first time in 1707.⁴⁰ Biologist George Rose has recently proposed that for climatic reasons, salmon populations in northern Newfoundland might have

³⁸ Ralph Pastore, *Shanawdithit's People: The Archaeology of the Beothuks* (St. John's, NL: Atlantic Archaeology Ltd., 1992), 39-40.

³⁹ PRO CO 194/3 f 308, Mr. John Roope to the Lords of Trade, 11 January 1796.

⁴⁰ PRO CO 194/4 f 148, Capt. John Underdown to the Lords of Trade, Account of the English fishery for 1707, 28 November 1707. A total of 165 tierces were taken in 1707.

experienced a cyclical decline during the late 1600s and early eighteenth century, though a recovery in salmon stocks likely happened during the middle third of the 1700s.⁴¹ If Rose is correct, his analysis indicates the inward movement of English salmon fishers corresponded to a period of cyclical scarcity, a combination of factors which might explain Beothuk attacks on English salmon fishers in 1721 and 1724.⁴² The English who entered the border region in the wake of the departing French were apparently quicker to use their guns than the coastal European cod fishers that the Beothuk had previously observed, and avoided. The penetration of the inner coast represented a major disruption of the Beothuk world.

The first major salmon entrepreneur at Newfoundland was George Skeffington, who started salmon posts deep in the Notre Dame Bay inner coastal region in the years immediately after Utrecht.⁴³ Skeffington was an early modern Atlantic character: an active Quaker, he was born in Bristol and spent time in Boston before settling in Bonavista at the northern tip of English coastal North America about the year 1700, where he engaged in petty trade and cooperage while settling into position as the senior merchant in the community.⁴⁴ When French forces menaced Bonavista in 1704-5,

⁴¹ George A. Rose, *Cod: The Ecological History of the North Atlantic Fisheries* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 2007), 245.

⁴² Marshall, *The Beothuk*, 64.

⁴³ Carson I. A. Ritchie, "George Skeffington," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter *DCB*), vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969). A more recent portrait of Skeffington can be found in Hans Rollmann, "'Thy Real Friend George Skeffington': Quaker and Salmon Fishing Pioneer in Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 57, no. 1 (1994): 13-20.

⁴⁴ Skeffington stated in an affidavit dated 1705 that he had been "...an inhabitant and a considerable Dealer in Newfoundland about five years..." See PRO CO 194/3/505, George Skeffington, Affidavit in Support of Lieutenant-Colonel Moody, 1705.

Skeffington surrendered the town without a fight, in peaceful Quaker fashion, and was taken prisoner to Plaisance for several months. He involved himself as well in the biggest public conflict of his day, a series of indiscretions on the parts of Commander Thomas Lloyd and Capt. John Moody, officers of the military garrison at St. John's. Skeffington wrote to London in support of Moody.⁴⁵

In 1719, Skeffington petitioned the King for permission to commence an exclusive, legally protected salmon fishery in the Notre Dame Bay borderland, the first in that region. In the preamble to the petition, he mentioned that he had already been operating a salmon fishery on the rivers in question

for about Twelve Years past[,] Improved the Salmon Fishery in two or three Rivers or Brooks to the Northward of Cape Bonavista, and hath at very great expence and Labour near forty miles up the Country cleared Lands of the wood, and the said Rivers or Brooks of rocks and stones and other obstructions, built houses, stages, [v]atts, works, and other Conveniences for catching and curing Salmon, which said Brooks or Rivers were never before Employed frequented or occupied by any person whatsoever, and far distant from any place where any fishing Ship hath used to fish.⁴⁶

In his annual report on the state of the fishery at the end of 1719, Capt. Ogle mentioned a second entrepreneur, William Keen, as being involved in the same project as Skeffington. Keen provided supplies and shipping facilities from St. John's while Skeffington operated the salmon posts in the borderland.⁴⁷ A mere twelve months later,

⁴⁵ PRO CO 194/3 f 505, George Skeffington, Affidavit in support of Lieutenant-Colonel Moody, 1705. Subsequent to Skeffington's letter of support, Moody was accused of causing the death of a servant woman by whipping her excessively.

⁴⁶ PRO CO 194/6 f 332, George Skeffington to the Privy Council, "The Humble Petition of George Skeffington, Inhabitant of Indian Bay in Newfoundland," 23 February 1720.

⁴⁷ PRO CO 194/6 f 359v, Capt. Ogle to the Lords of Trade, Observations on the state of the fishery for 1719, 14 October 1719.

however, Keen wrote to the Lords of Trade noting that the project with Skeffington had not “answered” as planned and petitioning for their help in collecting his investment.⁴⁸ The documents supporting the matter are somewhat unclear, but it appears that Skeffington encountered unexpected competition from other salmon entrepreneurs and was unable to guarantee the exclusive access to the salmon streams that Keen had come to expect.⁴⁹ This could have been expected, given the state of legal and commercial uncertainty that reigned in the borderland. Skeffington survived in the salmon fishery, however. Five years after the aborted alliance with Keen, Skeffington was mentioned in the annual report to the Lords of Trade as carrying on a successful salmon fishery but being bothered by “Indians.”⁵⁰ The following year Skeffington appeared again, with four salmon posts in Notre Dame Bay.⁵¹ By 1725, Skeffington’s salmon successes had been noticed by the principal merchants of Poole and they petitioned for greater access to the area above Bonavista, and requested that the government sponsor a formal hydrographic survey since the area, as everyone knew, was studded with islands and difficult to navigate.⁵²

⁴⁸ PRO CO 194/7 ff 53-54v, William Keen to William Popple, Secretary to the Lords of Trade, Observations on the state of the salmon fishery above Bonavista, 26 December 1720.

⁴⁹ PRO CO 194/7 ff 55-63, George Skeffington to William Keen, various documents relating to the salmon trade above Bonavista, 8 September 1718 to 29 September 1719.

⁵⁰ PRO CO 194/7 ff 240, Capt. Bowler to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, Answers to the Annual Heads of Enquiry for 1724, 9 October 1724.

⁵¹ PRO CO 194/8 ff 13v-14, Capt. Bowler to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry for 1725, 10 October 1725.

⁵² PRO CO 194/8 f 17, March 7 1726, Merchants and Traders of Poole to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, “Petition of the Merchants of the Town and Port of Poole to the Right Honorable the Lords of Trade and Plantations,” 7 March 1726.

As will be seen below, eventually the salmon fishery became the preserve of established English merchants such as Benjamin Lester and John Slade, who integrated salmon processing and marketing into larger Atlantic business systems. A report on salmon operations on the island of Newfoundland for the year 1786 indicated that Benjamin Lester was the largest operator of salmon posts in that year, with four of the fifteen operational camps under his control.⁵³ The report highlights the minor place of the salmon fishery in the overall scheme of settlement. Skeffington had not been a salmon merchant, but was rather a salmon catcher, and as such he depended on others to take his product to market. He was thus dependent on the cooperation of larger merchants, those with shipping capital and market connections, to set the prices he would receive, and thus the profitability of his operations. It was the larger merchant houses that, several decades subsequent to Skeffington, made a success of the salmon trade as part of wider, integrated borderland commercial strategies.

v. Seal Fishery and Seal Hunt

C. Grant Head concluded that the settlement of the northern region of the English part of Newfoundland in the eighteenth century was given strong impetus by a new understanding by northern merchants and planters that the southward seasonal migration of the harp seal herd could be harnessed to supplemental commercial advantage.⁵⁴ The pelts and oil of the seal offered valuable diversification away from the monolithic cod

⁵³ PRO CO 194/36 f 173v, Gov. Elliot to Lord Sydney, "An Account of the Salmon Fisheries erected and carrying on in the following places upon the Coast of the Island of Newfoundland in the year 1786," 25 November 1786.

⁵⁴ Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 76.

trade. Head makes it clear that Notre Dame Bay was settled because the seals migrated through the region in great numbers every fall.⁵⁵ Others writers have pointed out the role of the seal biomass in stimulating the settlement of these northern parts of the island and Labrador. They have invariably seen seals as an adjunct to cod, providing an important measure of diversification. Patricia Thornton, writing on the Belle Isle Strait, confirmed that in northern regions where the cod season was relatively shorter, permanent settlement was rendered viable by additional economic pursuits beyond the core cod fishery.⁵⁶ Chesley Sanger studied the later, nineteenth-century seal fishery and its role in the spread of permanent settlement in the north. Sanger was most interested in the spatial distribution of sealing in the years after initial settlement as it evolved into a springtime, vessel-based industry.⁵⁷ Similarly concerned with the later, nineteenth century, Shannon Ryan proposed that in the years of economic depression that followed the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, it was the seal fishery that allowed settlement at Newfoundland to remain viable, as an important complement to the feast-or-famine cod trade.⁵⁸

The historical development of sealing in Newfoundland should be analyzed as two distinct processes that are in turn a function of the migration patterns of the harp seal.

⁵⁵ Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 77.

⁵⁶ Patricia Thornton, "The Transition from the Migratory to the Resident Fishery in the Strait of Belle Isle," *Acadiensis* 19, 2 (Spring 1990): 92-120.

⁵⁷ Chesley Sanger, "The Evolution of Sealing and the Spread of Permanent Settlement in Northeastern Newfoundland," in *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography*, ed. John J. Mannion (St. John's, NL: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), 136-151.

⁵⁸ Shannon Ryan, *The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1994), 46-47.

In the late autumn and December, the seals move southward from their summer Arctic base to escape the freeze-up of the ocean surface. George Cartwright, the merchant and explorer who was heavily involved in the Labrador seal fishery and was an expert on the topic, wrote that the autumn migration lasted a maximum of about four weeks.⁵⁹ The early shore-based seal fishery took advantage of this period of mass migration. The gear required for this enterprise (small, rowed punts or shallops, twine for knitting the nets, larger-gauge ropes for framing the seal nets and affixing them to the coast, and finally a small amount of ironmongery) was similar to that used in the cod fishery, so entrepreneurs involved in one trade could easily enter the other. Later, however, settlers in Notre Dame Bay and other northern districts realized that on their way back north in the spring, the seals congregated on the ice floes, close to the coast, for several weeks, where they gave birth and generally lounged around. This gave workers a second chance to obtain seals by means of clubs and the ubiquitous muzzle-loading shotguns, though gunfire could scare the seals off the floes. The springtime pursuit of seals thus took on the appearance of a hunt, with larger volumes being processed and a more formal degree of commercialization in evidence.⁶⁰ The early, shore-based late-autumn net fishery evolved by the early nineteenth into a late spring, vessel-based industrial hunt.

A close reading of Cartwright's *Labrador Journal* yields much information about the details of the seal hunt in the eighteenth-century northern setting.⁶¹ The seal fishery

⁵⁹ Stopp, *The New Labrador Papers*, 99-100.

⁶⁰ Ryan, *The Ice Hunters*, 47-59.

⁶¹ Cartwright, *Labrador Journal*. This work is a reprint of Cartwright's own published journal, George Cartwright, *Journal of Transactions and Events During a Residence of Nearly Sixteen Years on the Coast of Labrador ...* 3 vols., (Newark, 1792).

was brief and intense.⁶² The mammals were caught in nets near the shore. The best areas for assembling the complex of nets and underwater pounds that made up the most productive sealing posts were narrow channels between the coast and close-in offshore islands. These "tickles" acted as funnels where the seals were drawn together in their pursuit of fish and during their southward journey. The seals became tangled in the nets and drowned, and sealers visited and cleared the nets several times per day in small boats. In some configurations, the nets could be raised and lowered from the shore with crude mechanical capstans, forming pounds in which the seals were captured and then brought ashore. Captive seals thrashed about and often damaged the nets, necessitating frequent repair *in situ*, since the short season meant that time could not be wasted in taking gear ashore for repairs. In his *Additions to the Labrador Companion*, Cartwright also mentions the firing of blank shots from muzzle-loading shotguns in order to direct the seals to "strike into the nets."⁶³

The northern seal fishery began to attract the attention of naval officials in the early years of the 1700s. In 1719, Capt. Ogle pointed out the value of the seal fishery in providing a dietary complement to cod fish. Ogle was one of the first officials to see that northern settlement would depend on activities beyond the cod fishery in order for residents to survive. According to Ogle it was William Keen, the aggressive Bonavista

⁶² Joseph Banks noted in 1766 that the seal fishers only really practiced their trade for an intense seven or eight days, but since they were left in the location for most of the winter, they incorporated fur trapping into the winter's work. See Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL): MG 253.1, [typescript], Joseph Banks, "Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador Commencing April the Seventh and ending November the 17th, 1766," 46-7.

⁶³ Stopp, *The New Labrador Papers*, 99.

merchant and erstwhile partner of George Skeffington in the northern salmon trade, who provided the first marketing channel for seal skins and oil.⁶⁴ Keen annually purchased all of the Newfoundland seal product for onward shipment to Great Britain. By 1732, as indicated by Capt. Falkingham's testimony to the Lords of Trade, sealing was the principal activity of settlers in the burgeoning English Notre Dame Bay communities.⁶⁵ This is a key detail: Fogo and Twillingate were by 1732 large enough to merit inclusion as discrete entries in the annual survey, as communities closely linked to the new seal fishery. Of course, the two harbours had long been part of the migratory French effort, a point not enumerated by Falkingham. Falkingham's 1732 report also provides information on how sealing had replaced furring as the main economic attraction for Englishmen in the borderland by that year:

...in some ports, especially to the Northward of St. John's, many people are employed in taking Seal in Netts at Fogo and Tillingate, new settlements this year, Bona Vest, and Trinity bay, the Furring trade is still carried on the Winter season, but not so advantageous as heretofore, I am informed that the last winter season was taken to the value of £391 lb sterling I can't learn that the Furriers have any commerce with the Indians, but that several of the Indians formerly had been destroyed by the Furriers, and since several English Men have been destroyed by the Indians.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ PRO CO 194/6 f 312, Capt. Ogle to William Popple, Secretary to the Lords of Trades and Plantations, 13 October 1719; Matthews, "William Keen," *DCB*, 3:323-324. Matthews concentrated in this entry on Keen's role in the development of the justice system at Newfoundland and did not address Keen's visionary role in opening up the north of the island to new commercial activity around the salmon and seal fisheries.

⁶⁵ PRO CO 194/9 f 214v, Captain Falkingham to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, "Answers to the Heads of Enquiry," 4 October 1732.

⁶⁶ PRO CO 194/9 f 214v, Captain Falkingham to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, "Answers to the Heads of Enquiry," 4 October 1732.

Throughout the initial years of English settlement in the Bay from 1728 and into the 1740s, it appears that fur trapping and sealing were the principal economic activities by residents. In 1743, Christopher Kilby, an agent in Massachusetts, wrote on behalf of Newfoundland merchant John Masters to the Lords of Trade, drawing their attention to the trade potential that existed in northern Newfoundland and expressing the general need for more fortifications to protect the landward aspects of the fishery. Kilby explained to the Lords that English seal fishers and fur trappers were at very close quarters to the French and were going to far as to occupy French fishing stations in the late winter, using them as bases from which to fish for seals.⁶⁷

The fact that he mentioned the navigational skill of the northern settlers highlights the concern of that era surrounding the difficulty of navigation in borderland waters. Kilby's report situates English seal fishers lurking in French harbours early in the year, prior to the arrival of the migratory *Terre-Neuves*.⁶⁸ His testimony, in conjunction with that of Falkingham ten years earlier, confirms the structure of informal settlement in Notre Dame Bay in the first years of English involvement there. The outer coast proved attractive to those with an interest in the seal trade. The inner coast and outside edge of the interior drew salmon fishers. The interior was the preserve of the Beothuk and declining numbers of English fur trappers.

The English practice of using French facilities for their late winter seal fishery, before the arrival of the French fleets, apparently continued for several decades. In 1768,

⁶⁷ PRO CO 194/12 f 2v, Chris Kilby to the Lords of Trade, 6 September 1743.

⁶⁸ PRO CO 194/12 ff 1-2, John Masters to the Lords of the Admiralty, 6 September 1743. Cf. Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 176.

the French complained to Governor Palliser that English fishermen from Twillingate were damaging French fishing stages and wharves and leaving the rotting carcasses of “*loups marin*” on the beach and in the French stages.⁶⁹ Such complaints highlight the cultural and economic liminality of the region and the occasional proximity, throughout the eighteenth century, of French and English fishers in the Bay. Palliser was sympathetic to the French case, noting in a message to his London superiors that in Notre Dame Bay it was avaricious merchant traders who were inciting their workers to damage French facilities.⁷⁰ This is a recurring theme through the period after the 1755-63 war. French fishers tried to assert their perceived rights of access as far east and south as Greenspond, while Palliser worked hard to balance the English interests against last-ditch French claims of legal access to points on the French Shore above Bonavista.⁷¹ French complaints of English seal fishers leaving carcasses in French fishing stages continued at least until 1787. Granville fishing captains complained in that year of English intrusions into their fishing rooms prior to their spring arrival.⁷²

⁶⁹ PRO CO 194/28 ff 50-51, [Des Touches] de la Frenaye to Governor Hugh Palliser [May- July] 1768.

⁷⁰ PRO CO 194/28 ff 27-28v, Hugh Palliser to Lord Hillsborough, 4 January 1769.

⁷¹ See for example the case of French captain Hamon, who was pushing the French Shore rights of his brethren at Greenspond and Bonavista as late as 1768: PRO CO 194/29 ff 26-26v. La Morandière discussed this case at great length; see Charles de la Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française de la morue dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, vol. 2 (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1962), 921-926.

⁷² Boston Public Library, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts (hereafter BPL): Ms. Fr. 175/46, [1787]. There is a sheaf of French manuscript letters relating to Newfoundland in the Boston Public Library, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts. Not all of the letters are dated, but of those that are, are all dated 1787.

vi. Keen and Coghlan

While William Keen can be credited with possessing the pioneering mercantile vision that recognized the value of non-cod commodities in opening up the trade north of Bonavista, he never resided in the region, preferring to conduct his business from Harbour Grace, Greenspond, and later, St. John's.⁷³ Born in the American colonies, he was one of the most important personalities in eighteenth-century Newfoundland history. Responsible for great advances in the formalization of a legal system at Newfoundland, Keen's murder in 1754 at the hands of a band of Irish drifters resulted in a change in British attitudes toward the large number of hapless Irish migrants at Newfoundland.⁷⁴ As shown above, Keen saw the value of the salmon and seal fisheries and integrated them into his multivariate commodity extraction and provisions trading business. Despite moving to Newfoundland in 1704, Keen maintained connections to Boston, was a business correspondent of the great Boston merchant, Thomas Hancock, and was involved in the return rum trade to Newfoundland from Boston and points in the West Indies.⁷⁵ For his part, Thomas Hancock was deeply involved in the trade of rum and other provisions to Newfoundland, including the northern borderland and beyond into French territory. Hancock's business records confirm the degree to which Newfoundland and the Notre Dame Bay borderland were connected to wider Anglo-Atlantic commercial orbits. In 1745 he instructed one of his captains to sail to Newfoundland with a mixed

⁷³ Matthews, "William Keen," *DCB*, 3:323-324

⁷⁴ Jerry Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals: Laws, Customs, and Naval Government, 1699-1832* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 192-4, 215-7.

⁷⁵ Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS): Microfilm edition of the Hancock Family Papers, Thomas Hancock Letter Book 1745-1750, 13 August 1745 and 24 September 1745. Hancock had business and trade contacts in the borderland.

cargo that included sheep, pigs, geese, cider, onions, shoes and oysters and to procure, in return, a load of salt or fish from any of the northern harbours, including those in French territory. Included in the captain's orders were instructions from Hancock to deliver a gift of one barrel of oysters to William Keen.⁷⁶ The Americans Hancock and Keen are just two examples of opportunistic Atlantic merchants who saw in the untested region above Bonavista new opportunities for trade and profit.

Another such entrepreneur was Jeremiah Coghlan, the first English merchant to base himself in Notre Dame Bay. Jeremiah Coghlan was of Irish parentage but was closely connected with the English port of Bristol and may have been born there.⁷⁷ It appears that Coghlan was the first merchant shipowner to base himself in Notre Dame Bay immediately after the Seven Years' War when the French made their ultimate attempts to reclaim borderland harbours as summer bases. Little is known about Coghlan's business, but there are signs that it prospered through the 1760s and into the 1770s. He wrote to Governor Montagu in 1777 claiming to have commenced sealing and salmon operations at Chateau Bay in Labrador in 1765.⁷⁸ Coghlan took advantage of the French cession of ownership of Labrador to the English in the Peace of Paris (1763) to quickly set up a sealing facility there.⁷⁹ He was likely a friend or acquaintance of

⁷⁶ Harvard Business School, Baker Library Historical Collections (hereafter BLHC), Hancock Papers, Box 10, Folder 1, "Government Instructions, Orders to Captains of Transports, 1741-1748," 5 April 1745 (loose).

⁷⁷ John Mannion, personal communication to Allan Dwyer, 3 March 2008.

⁷⁸ Joseph R. Smallwood *et al.*, eds., *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. I (St. John's, NL: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1967), 476.

⁷⁹ G.O. Rothney, "L'Annexion de la Côte du Labrador à Terre-Neuve en 1763," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 17 (1963): 213-243.

Governor Palliser and was encouraged by the latter to enter the Labrador trade.⁸⁰ He deployed men along the Labrador coast for both sealing and fur trapping. This was a time of great English interest in Labrador, and the English harbours in Notre Dame Bay acted as staging points for voyages to the north. Coghlan's career at Fogo shows how, in the years after 1763, Notre Dame Bay remained a contested region characterized by conflict and territorial claims by French, English, Beothuk and later Irish actors. Coghlan was mentioned in a letter of complaint, and referred to as the "amiral à Fougues," by the Granville captain De Larue in 1768.⁸¹ Coghlan was also specifically named in a second letter by De Larue, who endured a conflict with English fishermen at Twillingate. Coghlan appears to have been concentrating on developing a Fogo-based business from about 1762, though he was sailing back and forth from Bristol and Newfoundland to the Mediterranean and Ireland, and also explored the Labrador coast for suitable commercial bases. He was evidently an aggressive dealer, as there are notes in the colonial records of him treating his Fogo servants badly and, in one case, confiscating all the produce of one fisherman to satisfy that fisherman's debt to him, leaving nothing for the fisherman's other creditors to claim.⁸² Benjamin Lester, who had significant commercial interests in the borderland at Tilting, complained in his diary in 1767 that Coghlan "has shown me

⁸⁰ Memorial University of Newfoundland, Keith Matthews Collection, Keith Matthews Name Files (hereafter MHA/KMNF), C-266, Jeremiah Coghlan; William H. Whitely, "Governor Hugh Palliser and the Newfoundland and Labrador Fishery, 1764-1768," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 50 no. 2 (June 1969), 143-4, 154-9.

⁸¹ PRO CO 194/28 f 36v, Capt. Delarue to Governor Hugh Palliser, 26 May 1768.

⁸² MHA/KMNF: C-266, Jeremiah Coghlan. See also William Whitely, "Jeremiah Coghlan," in *DCB*, 4:158-60

many instances of his bad behaviour."⁸³ Lester was on a trip to inspect his premises at Tilting when he heard that Coghlan was undergoing legal challenges at Fogo for his improper dealings. Two weeks later, Lester received a letter from Coghlan which was "full of compliments and quite different from what Mr. Dobney told me. This fellow (Coghlan) ought to be guarded against."⁸⁴ On 14 August 1769 Coghlan was appointed naval officer for Fogo by Governor Byron.⁸⁵ Coghlan was by then the senior merchant in the borderland harbour which by 1769 was a commercial centre which merited formal administrative and military machinery. In fact, the institution of such mechanisms of empire constitute the beginning of the final stage of the borderland event.

Coghlan's Labrador operations, which may have struggled after his initial foray in 1765, were given new, brief life by a partnership he formed with George Cartwright in 1769, though the Labrador operation failed almost immediately through the loss of a schooner.⁸⁶ Coghlan continued in business through the early- and mid-1770s, a time when competitors were entering the borderland and challenging the dominance of the earlier arrivals. It was also a time of stable growth in the cod and salmon fisheries, and consolidation of the resident population at Newfoundland in general, as measured by the steadily increasing numbers of mistresses and children at Newfoundland during the period.⁸⁷ When the American war commenced Coghlan conducted himself well in his

⁸³ Dorset History Centre (hereafter DHC): Lester Garland Papers, D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 3 August 1767.

⁸⁴ MHA/KMNF, C-266, Jeremiah Coghlan.

⁸⁵ MHA/KMNF, C-266, Jeremiah Coghlan.

⁸⁶ MHA/KMNF, C-266, Jeremiah Coghlan.

⁸⁷ Shannon Ryan, *Abstract of Returns for the Newfoundland Fishery 1698-1833* (unpublished typescript, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of

capacity as naval officer, having been reappointed to the office in 1775 for the wider region of Fogo and Bonavista, and acted to fortify Fogo Harbour and raise volunteers for the defence of the town in the face of threatened attack by the American privateer Captain Grimes. In November Coghlan sent a message to Governor Montagu informing him that he had raised a militia and was standing by to repel all attackers. Coghlan signed the letter over the title "Colonel Commandant."⁸⁸ In 1775 he was appointed Justice of the Peace for Fogo as well.

The assignment of administrative functions such as naval officers and fishing admirals in borderland harbours took on more gravity in this region than in others. As *de facto* British influence surged northward after Utrecht in the form of settlers and merchants, it was followed by formal mechanisms of British sovereignty. To the French, these developments likely represented the most alarming in a succession of British actions to gain control of the Bay. The seemingly sudden installation of British institutions diminished the atmosphere of diplomatic liminality, making the region feel less like a zone of concurrent French-English commerce and more like an exclusive British enclave. For the Beothuk, it was an even more ominous development because with the harbours all surveyed and the French effectively marginalized, the sole remaining danger for the English to focus on was the Beothuk.

Newfoundland, 1969). For statistics on the salmon and cod fisheries, see pages 1771-95/9 and /10. On population see page 1771-95/11. This publication is a statistical digest of the annual fisheries return completed by the naval commodores and governors at Newfoundland, which are contained in the PRO CO 194 series of papers at the National Archives of the United Kingdom, with microfilm copies (poor) in various other locations.

⁸⁸ MHA/KMNF, C-266, Jeremiah Coghlan.

In 1782 Coghlan went bankrupt, having built a large and diverse business. Unkind rumours had been circulating for some time about the solidity of his operation. Merchants operating in the borderland were connected to wider Atlantic events, mainly through a web of credit relationships, and it is likely that he was unable to control the flow of commodities and related financing during the tumultuous years of the American War. There were a number of complaints by others against Coghlan's bad character. It is possible that Coghlan was too aggressive in his dealings with his planter-debtors and other merchants. Benjamin Lester, for example, complained in his diary in 1782 that some bad salmon he had bought was merely "a specimen of Mr. Coughlin's affairs."⁸⁹ In 1777 there was a flurry of correspondence between Coghlan, Governor Montagu, and Lieutenant Schomburg, the naval officer responsible for the northern region, over a series of incidents in Labrador which severely prejudiced Coghlan's business there. Coghlan had made significant investments in capital gear and servants, but was unable to exert strict control over his Labrador posts, and lost control of them to interloping English challengers.

Coghlan initially strengthened his Fogo base and by the 1770s he was sending ships to market with cod, salmon, furs and sealskins. By 1782, however, he was struggling and soon submerged into bankruptcy. He was the first merchant to exploit the varied commodity base of the northern borderland from a base inside the region, and this allowed him to take an early interest in Labrador in the years following the War. He used Fogo as a fulcrum to pursue wider trading opportunities but may not have possessed the

⁸⁹ MHA/KMNF, C-266, Jeremiah Coghlan.

temperament, nor the Atlantic market connections, required to manage a business of this type during a period of great change in the borderland. When he went bankrupt in 1782, he left a network of clients and knowledge that were secured by other merchants, most notably John Slade, and used to great success.

vii. Summary

In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht seemingly confirmed for the French that which they had always had in Notre Dame Bay, the right to fish in the summer from temporary shore stations. Yet, they abandoned the region after a few short years, and only returned five decades later when wider French losses in the Atlantic world gave renewed value to French claims in this borderland between Beothuk, French and English economic regimes. Ongoing backcountry incursions by English furriers, permanent camps operated by English salmon catchers, and concerted efforts by English fishers to harvest the newly-appreciated seal resource all likely signaled to the French that large-scale English settlement was imminent. Burgeoning English activity in the Bay brought them into physical spaces that were vital to the Beothuk economy, and precipitated a pattern of fatal English-Beothuk conflict that would continue for another century. Eventually, British imperial institutions were installed. This was one of the things that signaled the beginning of the end of the borderland event in Notre Dame Bay.

Early furriers and subsequent salmon catchers needed to be keener students of natural rhythms and animal habits than the later cod fishers. This is not to deny that the cod fishery required a limited knowledge of the movement of the various cod shoals, but the true keys to success in the cod fishery related as much to navigation, credit

management, and processing large volumes of product as they did to recognizing the signs of approaching bad weather. A furrier or a salmon catcher, on the other hand, required a different set of land-based skills which, once mastered, brought them into sustained contact with the Beothuk in this last area of Beothuk control. As well, furriers and salmon fishers required knowledge of the habits and movements of the Beothuk themselves if only to defend themselves from the increasingly militant Beothuk bands in the inner coastal region of Notre Dame Bay. The English furriers and salmon catchers of Notre Dame Bay were the first Newfoundland Europeans to experience woodland North America in a sustained way. Whereas Newfoundland cod fishers had for two centuries peered inland with suspicion, and feared the forest, furriers eagerly engaged the impoverished boreal ecology of Newfoundland in ways that resembled fur traders and colonial settlers in other parts of the New World.

The seal fishery was different. Seals bridged the earlier furring and salmon trades and the cod fishery. The seal fishery was an outer coastal pursuit that did not demand much in the way of landward travel skills, woodcraft or sensitivity to the interlinked elements of boreal climate and biology. It complemented the cod trade both temporally and in terms of gear employed and, as furs became depleted and human enterprise became concentrated in the coastal harbours, the seal and cod fisheries became the cornerstones of the northern Newfoundland economy.

The Beothuk did not incorporate fur procurement and trade with Europeans into their economy. Nor did they partner with outsiders in the catching of salmon. It can be proposed that the complex reasons for this lie in the status of their home territory as an

imperial, economic and interethnic borderland. The sudden change of legal regime in 1713 precipitated a trickle, then a flood, of incoming English and Irish entrepreneurs and settlers. There was no gradual peopling of the Bay's better harbours as had occurred over a period of two centuries along the English shore. The shifting legal status acted like a starter pistol with Skeffington, Keen, Coghlan and others rushing into the Bay and targeting vital Beothuk resources at key locations. The combination of European social change and population growth, itself a result of diplomatic adjustments to imperial territory and all occurring in a special boreal seacoast zone, presented grave challenges to the Beothuk economy.

Chapter Five

John Slade: The Borderland and Beyond

i. A Borderland Merchant

John Slade had the world-beating British navy at his back, but he entered the Newfoundland trade at a time and place which otherwise appeared risky. The traditional fishing harbours along the old English Shore were fully occupied by the middle years of the eighteenth century. The only sure way to gain a foothold in the lucrative English Newfoundland fishery would be through forcing out or replacing one of the established planters or merchants along the old shore, or by reaching into new areas along the north or south coasts of Newfoundland. A northward thrust would require a different set of skills than the traditional competencies possessed by Newfoundland fish merchants. He was fortunate that the other contenders for resources in the north, the French and the Beothuk, were both experiencing ongoing challenges to their wider economic territories. There was a diplomatic and economic vacuum in the bounded environmental precinct of Notre Dame Bay, and the new region suited mercantile operators who were innovative, adaptable, and aggressive.

Slade's leading role in orchestrating the action against Capt. De Larue over Sunday fishing stands as a testament to his mercantile character. The incident is also an example of how the English viewed the borderland as a lawless region. Throughout his career and after, the name of Slade and Company was associated with aggressive tactics

and unsporting methods. John Slade was first and last a fishing captain, and this coloured his approach to business later, when he was a substantial operator of spatially extensive commercial operations in the borderland and beyond. The borderland was an ideal place, and time, for one with his practical background in seafaring and trading. Slade's apparent marginal commitment to the law would have been cultivated over thousands of hours in Atlantic sea lanes and dozens of voyages around the periphery of British imperial territory. He likely saw any adherence to regulations as a hindrance. The borderland was made for men like him.

De Larue in Twillingate and Hamon in Greenspond were agents of the French state, attempting to regain harbours in Notre Dame Bay at the direction of Louis Bretel in Paris. They saw themselves as operating in a straightforward legal and diplomatic context. To be sure, there were *livres* to be made in dried codfish. However, if that had been their main concern the French would not have been in Twillingate or Greenspond in 1770, but would rather have fished up around Croque or in the south, near St. Pierre. In contrast Slade and his *confrères* Coghlan, Samson and others saw themselves as the bringers of law, and a new type of borderland law at that. In Notre Dame Bay, where there was no resident system of commercial policing, Slade and other English merchants and senior planters used a situational sense of ownership with a hybrid claim to "Almighty Power" and "the Law and Customs of our Country" to try and compel De Larue to stop fishing on Sunday.¹ Their ruse was an acquisitive act of territoriality

¹ Library and Archives Canada / Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F, Correspondance générale; Terre-Neuve et les pêcheries, vol. 4 (hereafter

couched as religious conviction. When the real legal authority in the region, Lieut. William Parker acting in his capacity as surrogate judge for the borderland region, later ruled that the actions of the English at Twillingate were inappropriate, it betrayed how disingenuous Slade and the other Englishmen had been.

Slade had begun to gain experience in the northern area of Newfoundland, above Bonavista, in the 1740s and early 50s while in the employ of William Kittier.² He grew up in the port of Poole, surrounded by seafaring traditions and people whose labouring lives were closely bound up with the age of sail. By his twenties he had developed a competency in sailing between England, Ireland, Newfoundland and the Iberian Peninsula. He acquired his own ship in 1753, three years before the commencement of the Seven Years' War, and apparently spent the war years taking advantage of the French absence from the fisheries to probe unexplored harbours and coves in Notre Dame Bay, White Bay and the *Petit Nord*. He learned about navigating and trading along the northern coast with its special combination of dangerous shoals, Beothuk Natives and lingering French seasonal fishers. He developed a particular appreciation for the French harbour of Toulanguet. In the 1760s Slade and others aggressively laid claim to fishing rooms, both English and French, and French fishing captains who appeared after the war found the harbours in the borderland claimed by "un grand nombre des familles

LAC/BAC C¹¹F/4) f 74-74v, "Signed petition of the captains and townsmen requesting Capitaine De Larue to cease fishing cod on Sundays," 30 June 1770.

² All biographical information in this paragraph is taken from W. Gordon Handcock, "Slade, John" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter *DCB*), ed. George W. Brown et. al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 4: 711-714; and Handcock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women: The Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 1989), 236-242.

angloises."³ In conjunction with his principal competitor, Jeremiah Coghlan, Slade spent the 1760s planting the roots of English enterprise in the borderland at Twillingate and Fogo. Though Slade and Coghlan were likely acting in bitter competition, their activities appeared in concert to the French as part of a single English advance.⁴ From his Trinity base, English merchant Benjamin Lester also referred to "Slade and Coghlan" as if they were a unitary phenomenon.⁵ Up to 1770, Slade was more of a captain and fishing admiral than merchant, and Jeremiah Coghlan was the premier mercantile force in the Bay. The years around 1770 were key. In 1769 Coghlan had established the first permanent sealing and trading post on the coast of Labrador; Slade likely viewed this development with a combination of alarm and commercial lust, and hurried to extend his reach to Labrador. Cartwright recorded a Slade post in Labrador in the year 1771.⁶ In 1773 Slade was appointed naval officer for Twillingate; this was around the same time that Jeremiah Coghlan held the same position at Fogo Harbour.

The character of the borderland as a place with only rudimentary systems of law emerges in snippets of information about John Slade in the 1760s and there is ample evidence of a particularly avaricious side to Slade's business tactics. He was named as defendant in a suit over non-payment of wages as early as 1759.⁷ He hired workers in 1776 who had already been "shipped" by Benjamin Lester in Poole, and the following

³ LAC/BAC: Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F/3 "Extrait des déclarations des capitaines des navires qui ont été employés en 1764 à la pêche de la morue sur la côte de Terre-Neuve..." vol. 3, [1764], f 270.

⁴ La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 923.

⁵ Dorset History Centre, (hereafter DHC): Lester Garland Papers, D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 10 June 1770.

⁶ Handcock, "Slade, John," in *DCB*, 4: 712.

⁷ DHC: DC/P/C/A/6/22, Dorset County, Poole Borough, Oaths Concerning Debt, 1759.

year Slade was delinquent in submitting mandated naval medical insurance payments.⁸ His aggressive character was infused into the culture of the firm he founded. In 1788, long after Slade had ceased to travel annually to his Newfoundland mercantile base, Lester wrote in his diary of an attempt by Slade men to evict some of his own men from a salmon post in Dog Bay near Fogo Island.⁹ In 1793, after Slade's death the previous year, a dispute in Labrador had to be resolved by the local naval officer, Capt. Shivers, after Slade men attempted to move in on a sealing post near Battle Harbour that was the traditional property of the firm of Noble and Pinson.¹⁰ It is noteworthy that Slade's business struggles are reflected in French sources and historiography. His name was known by French fishing captains and was noted in less than friendly terms in at least two reports of complaint. French reports identified Slade as the *amiral* of Toulinguet in 1770.¹¹ A French report cited by la Morandière noted that Slade, in addition to Coghlan and a group of other English merchants, had been opposing the French since 1763.¹²

ii. The Supply Trade

There were three general types of commercial arrangements that Slade embraced in order to solve the problem of getting large volumes of product processed and prepared for shipment to markets: the supply trade, dedicated work crews, and small

⁸ Hancock, "Slade, John," in *DCB*, 4: 713; PANL: GN/2, Colonial Secretary's Letterbook, Vol. 7, f 52, Aug 30 1777.

⁹ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 19 July 1788.

¹⁰ Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL): Slade Collection, MG 460, Box 23, Battle Harbour Ledgers, 1793 Ledger, n/p (endpapers).

¹¹ LAC/BAC: Fonds des Colonies, Série C¹¹F/4 f 77v, Correspondence générale; Terre-Neuve et les pêcheries, Copie de l'ordre de M. Parker au Capitaine Slade, amiral anglais à Toulinguet..." 8 August 1770.

¹² La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 2: 923.

entrepreneurial partnerships. The supply trade or truck system, in which Slade bartered supplies and manufactured goods for processed cod and other commodities rested upon an edifice of credit and trust. The system encouraged settlement mainly by allowing resident, non-merchant planter families to get supplies in return for the product of their labours without having to travel long distances. It made permanent residence viable. The role of credit in community formation will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Slade employed the truck system as a method of quickly and efficiently laying claim to both physical and commercial space in the borderland. In 1770 Slade commenced his first truck-style barter arrangements with residents.¹³ If a merchant's two main commercial goals were to acquire territory and to acquire relationships, then the supply trade to resident planters allowed Slade to acquire territory by proxy. Planter relationships were not exclusive to Slade, and it is likely that some, but not all planters, had active accounts with two or more merchants. It was important, therefore, for merchants to own a large number of planter accounts, as these families represented notional shares of what were thought to be limited cod and seal resources.¹⁴ Salmon was somewhat of a secondary fishery and was pursued in a different fashion, with dedicated crews of men deployed at salmon rivers. Seals, still a shore-based net fishery in the years when Slade was scrambling to dominate regional commerce, required that a short stretch of the coast in key areas be reserved each year. And, of course, drying cod required access to good fishing rooms, sheltered and conducive to the construction of nearby

¹³ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 3, 1787 Ledger, "Sundry People" n/p (endpapers).

¹⁴ A planter's family consisted of both relatives and hired servants. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

stages and stores. Slade thus worked in the 1770s to assemble a self-perpetuating system of resident fishers who, in concert with his own indentured servants and artisans, would provide him with consistent access to the products of the borderland. There were costs and risks in managing his transatlantic work force, such as struggling to compel the crews to perform at a level which accomplished overall firm goals but stopped short of brutalizing them to the degree that they would flee, a common occurrence in the English Newfoundland fishery.

When Jeremiah Coghlan went bankrupt in 1782, Slade stood to gain immensely, since though his own business had suffered through the lean years of the American war, he had managed to remain solvent. He shifted his principal base of operations to Fogo, the best harbour in the borderland. By this time Slade was based in Poole and no longer traveled to the Bay, preferring to direct activities through three of his nephews. Slade's only son John had died young in 1773.¹⁵ The breadth of Slade's commercial scope can be seen in the individual planter accounts in the surviving ledgers of the firm, which commence with the 1782 upgrade of the Fogo establishment to the core operation of the borderland. In addition to these planter accounts, the Slade Collection contains a number of lists of outbound ladings on Slade ships, as well as sundry other documents which illuminate the diversity of Slade's commodity trade.

Most individual planters conducted limited operations, producing mostly codfish, seals and their derivative oils, though there were a few who expanded their spring and summer pursuits to include winter lumbering and furring. A good example of this

¹⁵ Hancock, "Slade, John," in *DCB*, 4: 713.

strategy of diversification is that of the Waterman family of Tilting, Richard and John, father and son, who in 1790 and 1791 traded with Slade's Fogo store for several varieties of seal pelts, 7 quintals of fish, 8½ gallons of cod oil, 169 feet of board and 16 lbs of feathers.¹⁶ Newfoundland planters resembled merchants rather than servants, though this is not to equate indentured servants with peasants. There is ample evidence of this in the Slade ledgers, where planters eagerly traded with the merchant for any and all borderland commodities for which a market was available. One sure sign of profit-orientation on the part of a planter was innovative commodity production in the borderland in years when his account balance was in surplus, a key point. If a planter traded with Slade for a variety of commodities in a year when his account showed a surplus credit balance, it could only have been in order to gain extra profits. Conversely, there are plenty of instances in the ledgers of financially strapped planters depositing incongruous items with the merchant in order to lessen their debts. Usually they returned previously bought items in order to square a debt or at least to lessen an obligation. There is also evidence of entrepreneurial small-lot trading on the part of planters. In 1793 Thomas Burke settled his account in part with 110 lbs of coffee at 5 shillings per pound, for a total of £5.10.0. His account ended the year in surplus, so this is not an instance of a strapped planter raiding the cupboard for anything to keep debt at bay.¹⁷ Burke sailed to St. John's several

¹⁶ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1789 Ledger, f 101. In 1768, Benjamin Lester had been involved in a court case with Richard Waterman, which was found in Lester's favour, see DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 12 October 1768; 13 October 1768. Waterman's effects were seized and he lost his fishing room.

¹⁷ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 5, 1793-4 Ledger, f 60.

times per season and likely engaged in small-lot exchange of consumer products with Slade and other merchants.

iii. The Dedicated Slade Crews

Slade required shore crews at his principal Fogo facility, as well as all his other posts, both to engage in fishing and drying fish as well as to receive and manage the made fish and other commodities traded by the planters and entrepreneurs who were clustered, figuratively and sometimes literally, around the Slade operation. The types of occupations retained ranged from ship's crews, boatmen and fish splitters to clerks, carpenters, coopers and cooks. George Cartwright, who operated a facility in Labrador similar to Slade's during this period, listed the types of servants that would be required at the ideal facility, and included such functions as a sawyer, a dairy maid, a farmer and a "taylor."¹⁸ There were specialized functions in each of the three main fisheries (cod, salmon, seal) but it appears likely that men moved between jobs as the seasons progressed. A fish salter in the summer might find himself part of a lumber crew in the winter and acting as a spotter at a sealing post in the spring.

For servants contracted in England or Ireland, there was a wide range of compensation rates for service in the Newfoundland fishery. With some variation over time, servants were hired at a rate of pay ranging from 8 or 10 pounds sterling a year to 10 pounds sterling or even more. The arrangement usually included food, alcohol, board, and laundry. In most cases the servant would be delivered back to England at the end of

¹⁸ Marianne P. Stopp, *The New Labrador Papers of Captain George Cartwright* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 199.

the work term. In other cases, all or some amount of the wage was paid in installments to a parent back in England while the son was at work across the Atlantic.¹⁹ There is some evidence that servants could be offered differing compensation depending on the particular circumstances of their work experience, or extraordinary conditions which may have arisen during their time of service and required offsetting pay arrangements. The information in the back of one ledger from Slade's Battle Harbour installation includes notes on amounts to be paid to servants the following season. They appear to be standard wage rates with additional items noted for approval by management in Poole. Jonas Battrick, for example, was to be paid £21 plus one canvas frock and provided with passage home. Thomas Blandford was promised £24 as well as a pair of boots and 11 [shillings] worth of tobacco. Samuel Shappick was simply promised "£23/11 of Truck."²⁰ There was a standard clothing kit provided to servants, and a record of this survives in the Slade ledgers. On June 21, 1789, the same Samuel Shappick was provided the following items at no cost:

1 Frock	1 pr Trousers	
1 pr Shoes	1 pr Hose	1 [Rd] Twine
2 Shirts	1 Waistcoat	1 pr Drawers
1 Y ^d Swanskin	[Bills]	Leather
1 Hatt ²¹		

Then, on August 5 of the same year, he was given the following:

¹⁹ There are several instances in the Slade ledgers of monies being paid to mothers or fathers back in Poole or its hinterland. As well, there are cases of third parties, perhaps Poor Law officers or parish administrators, being apportioned shares of servant wages. These third parties may also have been creditors of the servants or their families. See: PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 23, Battle Harbour Ledgers, 1793 Ledger, f 3, 4.

²⁰ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 23, Battle Harbour Ledgers, 1808 Ledger, f 41.

²¹ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1789 Ledger, f 35.

1 Jacket	1 Waistcoat	2 pr Drawers
1 Cap	2 pr Hose	2 pr Shoes
2 Shirts	Leather	Bills
12 Needles	6 Blades	1 Frock
1 pr. Blue Trousers	2 Combs	4 Yd Swanskin
¼ lb Yarn	1 Handker	1 Rd Twine
1 Knife ²²		

The latter entry was most likely to fit Shappick out for the winter lumber woods or perhaps a furring or sealing camp, since the pattern of the Labrador labour cycle was to deploy winter crews in early September. Shappick must have been a low-level member of the Labrador crew, because his annual wage was entered as "Victuals & Clothing & £2" for six summers and winters. The fact that there were formal conditions of employment as a servant, with additional, sundry items added to the deal on occasion, implies that merchants had to be flexible in their treatment of servants. They had to be prepared to offer servants a package of monetary and other perquisites to entice them to the fishery. Additional evidence that merchants had to compete for servants and to think about how to retain them is provided by evidence of laddered wage structures at Slade's Battle Harbour outpost. Henry Smith was paid annual rates of £6, £7, £8, £9 and finally £10 for the years 1790-94. There is an implied incentive system in this rising compensation dynamic. The annual wage increases implied by this rising wage structure were 17%, 14%, 12.5% and 11%. Any labour system where such measures were necessary was one where the threat of losing the workers in question was clear and present. The real lesson, however, may be the existence of broad variations in

²² PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1789 Ledger, f 63.

compensation and genuine creativity on the part of merchants in finding ways to keep servants in place.

Surviving indenture agreements show the wide variety of compensation arrangements available to even the most humble of servants and imply an ability on the part of “youngsters” to bargain for varying structures of pay and terms of service. In 1793, young William Hoare from Colliers Piddle in Dorset was hired as “a good youngster” to work in Slade’s Labrador fishery. His wages were agreed as “Victuals & Cloaths for six Summers & five Winters...and if he behaves well at the Expiration of the Term, to have one pound one shilling in addition to his victuals and clothes.”²³ Robert Irish, also hired at the rank of “good youngster” was paid in the form of victuals and clothes for seven summers and six winters, as well as a bonus of seven guineas at the expiration of his term and have all his old clothes back. As Gordon Handcock has explained, significant numbers of the young men who joined the fishery at the entry level were introduced to merchants by vicars or parish poor law officers, and so likely had their particular compensation arrangement negotiated by a third party.²⁴ Still, the fact remains that merchants did not operate within a context of rigid wage and service schedules, but rather were prepared to offer varying wage promises to labourers in order to fill berths.

Sailors supplied their labour in return for wages and perquisites, as opposed to planters and servants whose labour was oriented toward the harvesting and processing of commodities. As with servants, seamen of various classes appear to have been able to negotiate compensation arrangements within a spectrum of possibilities acceptable to the

²³ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 34, File 5, “Shipping Papers.”

²⁴ Handcock, *Soe longe as their comes no women*, 184-188.

merchant. A collection of shipping papers or crew agreements has survived from Slade's 1793 Labrador fishing season and they indicate almost universal variety in agreed compensation structures. John Brown and George Tuck, for example, were both hired at the rank of seaman. Brown was paid 55 shillings per month with an advance of one month's pay and an allowance of 20 shillings per month to his wife in Ringwood, Hampshire. Tuck, on the other hand, received 3 pounds sterling per month plus 5 shillings per month to his mother Sarah of Wareham in Dorset.²⁵ Ships' captains or masters also seemed to have the ability to negotiate unique wage arrangements with Slade, perhaps according to differential levels of experience or perceived skill. Richard Spencer of Sturminster signed in 1793 to captain the *Fame* to and from Labrador for a salaried wage—a sure sign of skilled labouring status—of 4 pounds sterling per month. But John Biddlecomb, skipper of the *Hazard*, could only get 3 pounds sterling a month. The place of masters as potential competitors of their merchant employers was recognized by the clause in the shipping papers of all the captains that they were hired “without leave to carry Goods or Trade or claim to Primage or other perquisite.”²⁶

The production of mass quantities of commodities and the related employment of significant numbers of servants and artisans called for investment in large amounts of fixed equipment and structures.²⁷ A surviving inventory of company-owned goods for Slade's Fogo base for the year 1787 indicates the astounding breadth of investment

²⁵ PANL: MG460, Slade Collection, Box 34, File 5, “Shipping Papers.”

²⁶ PANL: MG460, Slade Collection, Box 34, File 5, “Shipping Papers.” Primage was a gratuity sometimes claimed by captains in addition to wages.

²⁷ The term *production* in this dissertation refers to the harvesting or catching of natural commodities, and the semi-processing of these commodities in preparation for either use in the borderland or shipment to market.

required to reach the privileged status of profitable, transatlantic merchant, especially in a boreal bioregion where additional capital requirements related to shelter, food, transportation, storage and defence acted as barriers to entry for aspiring players. The inventory lists such items as large iron boiling pots, boats compasses, sledges, and vast amounts of ironmongery, tools, textiles, food, furnishings and alcohol in various forms. All of this was housed in nine buildings, a "Salt House," "The Old Stage," the "Dwelling House," and houses "No. 1" to "No. 6." There would have been numerous other outbuildings as well, which are not listed in the inventory, as they were not used for storage of capital gear. The installation of these buildings and structures themselves in turn generated the need for upkeep and maintenance. To this end the inventory lists rat traps, barrels of yellow and black varnish, lanterns, window glass and a number of other supporting items.²⁸

iv. Varieties of Commerciality

In any given year, there were a number of small entrepreneurial enterprises which sought to profit from the environment's offerings in the bioregion above Bonavista. They were neither resident planters with families, nor were they full-scale merchants. They can be identified by their names (for example, John Forster & Co.) and by the fact that they purchased no household goods or children's items. These ventures could be either single- or multi-year projects, but seldom last more than three years. Often these small, non-merchant operations concentrated on a single commodity, perhaps as a result of a

²⁸ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 3, 1787 Ledger, n/p, "Inventory of Goods wth J.S.J. at Fogo fall 1787."

particular set of skills possessed by the principals. For example, in late May and early June 1787, at roughly one week intervals, John Forster and Company sold Slade five lots of wood products, ranging from completed barrels and barrel staves, to well over 10,000 board feet of juniper and pine plank and finished lumber.²⁹ The regular intervals between the transactions are most likely a function of the time it took Forster to travel to the head of Gander or Exploits Bay to his lumbering camp, load his skiff, and ferry or tow the material through the isles of Notre Dame Bay to Slade's Fogo facility. Slade even rented Forster a skiff for the winter at a fee of £2.0.0, as well as two whipsaws for £1.0.0. The total value of Forster's good winter's work was £67.14.7, including the rental of the boat. But it was May, and the cod fishery was only just starting for the year. In late August and September Forster further offloaded some seventy quintals of fish at Slade's wharf and had his account credited for a value of £46.1.0. There are numerous examples like this one in the Slade accounts. William Rideout and Sons, for example, delivered large volumes of finished juniper and pine board to Slade, as well as two fishing punts and a larger seal skiff, but closed the account for 1789 with £24.7.3 still owing. Required to purchase pork, bread, tea, rum, canvas, rope, blankets and numerous other items from Slade at Slade-determined rates, their dependent status, based on a lack of commercial scale, rendered the Rideouts structurally unprofitable.³⁰

²⁹ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 3, 1787 Ledger, f 25.

³⁰ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, Ledger 1789 f.15, 141. I assume in the case of William Rideout and Sons that the operation is commercial in nature, and not a family planter concern because of the mercantile name of the account ("Rideout & Sons") as well as the fact that there are no purchases in the account for domestic items usually associated with planter wives (such apron check cloth and combs) or children's clothing and shoes.

Slade and Company was also happy to enter into small, short-term business operations in the borderland, usually for specific commodities or defined periods of time. Slade and Ward formed in 1784 to go after borderland salmon and furs.³¹ In August of that year, the venture was credited with provisions and gear including shot, powder and flints, two types of twine, and two "traps." Then in June of 1785 the account is credited out for provisions, salmon nets, rope and tools. The produce of this equipment was debited in September of the second year, 1785, as 12½ lbs of beaver, 26 otters, 19 "catts," 5 foxes and 25 tierces of salmon. Significant total revenues amounted to £78.8.0 and equal profit amounts of £12.17.11 were credited to the accounts of Matthew Ward and Slade and Company, respectively. Slade earned a profit margin of 23 percent on the year's venture, calculated from Slade and Co.'s £12.17.11 share of profits on a capital commitment to the venture of £52.12.2. Slade could then sell the furs in England for an additional 20 to 35 percent profit.³² For these secondary sales of furs in England, a crude idea of profit margins can be calculated by assigning Fogo prices to two shipments of furs recorded in Benjamin Lester's diary in 1782. Using Fogo purchase prices, the first Lester shipment was worth £373, but in fact fetched £445 from "Mr. M. Abram" at Poole. The second Lester shipment was likewise worth £334 at Fogo prices but sold for £450 to "Mr. Moses" at Poole. These amount to profit margins of 19% and 35% respectively. Profits were good in the borderland.

³¹ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 2, 1784 Ledger, f 71.

³² DHC: D/LEG/F8, Diary of Benjamin Lester, [December] 1782.

v. Beyond the Borderland: Labrador

Fogo Harbour became the centre of the economic action for the borderland in the 1780s and 1790s due to its central location and prime access to marine commodities and shipping corridors. In the fall of 1787 the Slade Fogo complex consisted of nine buildings and likely numerous other associated structures such as oil vats, flakes, and slipways for boats.³³ The Slade Battle Harbour ledgers contain information that indicate the degree to which Fogo was well established as the centre of operations for the wider firm by the 1790s.³⁴ The fact that a separate set of ledgers was initiated for Battle Harbour from 1793 indicates in itself the degree to which Fogo was now somewhat of a hub. It was large enough to have satellites, the most important of which was Battle Harbour in Labrador. In addition to being the core operating area of his commodity extraction regime, by the 1790s Fogo emerged as the launch point for operations in Labrador (see Figure 5.1).

Labrador's 1763 change from French to British control was an important event for both merchants and residents of Notre Dame Bay. Overnight, their region was transformed from a fishing and sealing periphery to an important base for further explorations beyond the borderland. Both the generalized perception of postwar French retreat, which signaled the marked acceleration of English migration into Notre Dame Bay, and the accession of Labrador into the British Newfoundland strategic and commercial fold, marked the year 1763 as the beginning of the second stage in the evolution of the borderland. The first stage had been the post-Utrecht expansion of

³³ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 3, 1787 Ledger, (endpapers).

³⁴ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 23, Battle Harbour Ledgers, 1794 Ledger, f 1.

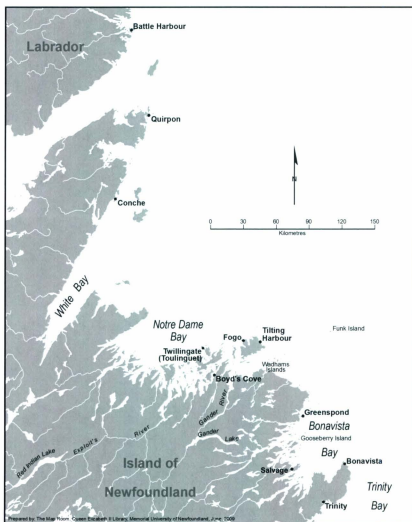


Figure 5.1 Beyond the borderland: The *Petit Nord* and Labrador

interest in the region from a venue for casual fur trapping and salmon catching to a new territory for expansion of the full range of Newfoundland English commercial activity.

The activist postwar governor, Hugh Palliser, moved resolutely to establish clear British control over Labrador. He issued various commands that settlement in the region be prohibited and that visits be strictly limited to commercial operators and missionaries. Only British captains who had cleared from British ports could fish on the coast of Labrador. He was convinced that an aggressive, Hudson's Bay Company-style trade in furs could be initiated with the Native residents of the area, the Montagnais. Palliser stipulated that only the first, second and third captains to arrive at a given Labrador harbour each spring could lawfully enter into trade relations with the "Savages." He promulgated the curious order that each Labrador fishing post should construct a physical barrier "at a proper distance from all the Fishing Stages" where fur trading could proceed in a seemingly sterile setting. He also ordered that Labrador fishing captains and post managers not allow "their people & the Savages to mingle together."³⁵

Slade and Company focused its attention on a fishing room at Battle Harbour that had, presumably, been long-claimed by John Slade from the earliest days of his interest in Labrador. By 1786, the Battle Harbour operation had acquired considerable commercial gravity. In that year Slade had twelve servants at the facility, the same number as at the Fogo base, though the paucity of planter residents along the Labrador coast at this early

³⁵ BL: Add. MSS. 35,915, Hardwick Papers f 92-93v. Declaration of Governor Hugh Palliser, 28 August 1765.

stage made the Battle Harbour post materially different in one important respect.³⁶ If commodities were to be drawn out of the Labrador environment, it would have had to be done through the use of dedicated, indentured crews alone, rather than through a portfolio of producing entities including servant crews, joint ventures, and resident planters, as at Fogo. By the fall of 1793 the Battle Harbour facility had some twenty-five servants in place, under the management of one Gustavus Hoddinott.³⁷ In that year the accounts of Slade and Company's Labrador servants were transferred out of the Fogo ledgers to a separate set of books, kept in the central Labrador location of Battle Harbour.³⁸ This marked the post's graduation from a tentative, northern sealing post to a commercial headquarters in its own right. Battle Harbour itself had between four and six satellite posts, staffed with five or six men each, throughout the 1780s and 1790s. These posts were part of the Battle Harbour complex and the servants staffing them were considered to be part of a unified Labrador operation for catching cod and seals, and trapping furs. A typical Slade invoice of outbound produce from Labrador for the *Delight* sometime in the fall of 1793, shows a lading of 23 hogsheads of train (cod) oil, 1 hogshead of seal oil, 613 quintals of fish and a crate containing martin, fox, beaver and otter skins in addition to 3 broken traps.³⁹

³⁶ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 34, File 1, "Crew in Labrador & Newfoundland fall 1786," loose.

³⁷ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 23, Battle Harbour Ledgers, 1793 Ledger, n/p (endpapers).

³⁸ See PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 23 for the set of Battle Harbour ledgers for the years 1793-1811 with several years missing.

³⁹ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 23, Battle Harbour Ledgers, 1793 Ledger, n/p (endpapers).

Though its legal status as British territory was clear, Labrador emerged as a new borderland after 1763. In fact, it can be argued that one of the markers of the end of the Notre Dame Bay borderland event was the institution of newer zones of contention in other bioregions such as Labrador. In the new northern zone, the Montagnais were more amenable to trade with Europeans than the Beothuk had been. With Palliser's regulations in place, attempting to regulate contact between aggressive English merchant traders and local Native groups, the Labrador coast emerged as a region of experimentation and innovation in many of the same ways that Notre Dame Bay had been half a century earlier. Labrador also saw instances of conflict between different commercial empires. For example, early in the 1790s there was an incident between Slade's men in Labrador and those of Noble, Pinson & Sons, a substantial merchant. That conflict was centred on a sealing post and an apparent attempt by Slade workers to encroach on the territory claimed by Pinson.⁴⁰ The incident left a small clutch of documents which indicate that the Slade men burned a building and acted roughly towards some of the servants of the Noble firm.

vi. Summary

John Slade apparently left a mark on the firm that survived him, which persisted in some of the founder's aggressive tactics. Slade was certainly not the only Atlantic merchant firm of that era to act in ways that its competitors considered unfair, but not all merchants performed this way. There does not emerge from the documentary sources

⁴⁰ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 23, Battle Harbour Ledgers, 1793 ledger, n/p (rear).

any indication that Benjamin Lester, for example, acted in ways that were commercially belligerent. Lester's activity in the Notre Dame Bay borderland, as will be seen in the following chapter, was as one part of a wider portfolio of facilities at Newfoundland. Slade operated from within the borderland, and the region forced him to take a particularly aggressive approach in acquiring territory and relationships.

The central strategy of John Slade's borderland system, continued after his retirement by his nephews, was to assemble a portfolio consisting of three types of production vehicles: proprietary (his own servants and crews,) venture-based, and planter-based. Each type had strengths and weaknesses. His own, mostly teenaged work crews could be closely controlled but had to be fed and clothed, and as seasonal workers on the Atlantic frontier could not always be trusted to remain in place (see Chapter Seven). The one-off and multi-year ventures he engaged in allowed for the targeted pursuit of key commodities, but these ventures were costly as well, usually calling for the provisioning of a work crew composed of unknown, distant workers. Resident planters would appear to offer the best risk-return profile from Slade and Company's point of view. As residents, and usually with families, planters had committed themselves to the borderland and needed Slade to provide them with provisions. Though annual production levels from individual planters could be volatile, this did not matter much to Slade as profits were made at two points in the movement of harvested commodities and at four points in the overall truck system, thus spreading commercial risk beyond the borderland. Of the two centres of profit for commodities, namely the borderland exchange point for provisions against commodities, and then the European markets where salmon and furs,

feathers, fish, seal skins and oils were sold, it was the latter that was likely the most profitable for Slade and Company.

Chapter Six

Benjamin Lester: The Borderland from the Trinity Base

i. An Atlantic Merchant

On 17 December 1762, a Friday, Benjamin Lester left Trinity in the sloop *Dolphin*, under master John Kennedy, in a gale of wind and moderate seas.¹ In the evening they passed “Backilew” (Baccalieu) Island and set a course east for England. They were accompanied by another of Lester’s ships under the hand of Capt. Francis. When night fell, Francis was about four miles astern of the *Dolphin* as the two sailing ships headed into the Atlantic winter night. It was wartime, and having missed the convoy that departed from St. John’s on November 23 the *Dolphin* and its companion ship formed a flotilla of two. The crew and Lester ate boiled beef for dinner. Lester’s last note in his diary for the evening were the words “hard weather.” The next morning the weather was fine, but Lester wrote “it was very cold last night, Deck froze but did not take in much watter.” Upon settling down to do some paperwork he was disappointed to find that he had forgotten his invoice book back in Trinity, which listed the items he needed to assemble for the following fishing season. In somewhat frantic script he began to list the things he could remember they needed in Trinity: “Long lines and yarn hose, Ruggs & Blankets but the latter is of Scott’s goods, also Great Coats a Quantity, noe

¹ All material contained in this account of the 1762 winter trip to England is from Dorset History Center: Lester Garland Papers (hereafter DHC: D/LEG)/F2, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 25 November 1762, and 17 December 1762 to 8 January 1763.

Powder, Shott, Nails or any kind of provis[ion]s, barely enough til Spring...Ship Will^m Cooper if possible.” By the third day of the Journey the weather had turned “dirty:”

Ship’d a great deal of Watter, our Crew Bare of Cloaths & very wet, one of them took down Sick with a great Cold, also the boy John Andrews the same, blew hard in the morning, ship’d so much watter could not make a fire to dress victuals, bad for our Crew.²

The next day the weather was more moderate, and they were able to “get our sick up again and Dress some broth for them.” The journey continued with rough weather, hail and snow, though on 22 December Lester was able to write “our little Vessell holds up her side to admiration though it blows hard & a great sea.” The next day the sloop was taking on water and more of the crew took sick “being always wet, get cold & noe place to hang up their Cloaths makes it very bad.” The ship was now taking on water constantly. On the first morning of their second week underway, they were experiencing a “great sea from the Westward, ready to devour us.” The storm continued. On Christmas day, the wind blew “violent strong, the sea all on fire,” again threatening to “devour” the sailboat. On 27 December, ten days out of Trinity, the wind finally calmed: “mended our sails and dry’d our Cloaths & I had a piece of my Turkey made into soup with a little Beef, it’s remarkable it was killed two Days ere we left Trinity...the Cold weather kept it from mouldering or otherways.” On 30 December the *Dolphin* met more violent weather with “heavy squalls hail and Rain with a great Sea, Ship’d a Quantity of Watter.” In rough weather on New Year’s Eve Lester opened a bottle of white wine for the crew. On 1 January, in their third week out of Trinity, they saw their first sail, and Lester wrote “thank God.” On 3 January they hove to and were told by the crew of a

² DHC: D/LEG/F2, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 19 December 1762.

Navy frigate, HMS *Brilliant*, that peace had been declared between Britain and France and Spain. They soon saw ten men of war standing to, and hailed a merchantman from Virginia. Lester remarked the “the sea seems full of ships.” On 4 January they saw part of the defeated French fleet heading into Brest. The *Dolphin* made land on 5 January and they sailed into the Channel with “smooth water,” moving slower now, as the area was full of ships. On 6 January they saw the Lizard, a south Cornwall peninsula which marks the southernmost point in Britain. Around noon on 8 January, just over three weeks from Trinity, the *Dolphin* tied up at the wharf in Plymouth. Lester’s first act on shore was to send a bill for £250.17 to “Mr. Noble.” He had dinner with friends and lodged at The Mitre tavern, before catching a post chaise the next day for home, Poole, Dorset.

Benjamin Lester was one of eighteenth-century Newfoundland’s most ambitious and successful merchants. Whereas John Slade based himself in the borderland and subsequently projected commercial power beyond the region to Labrador, Lester was based outside the region, in Trinity. He saw the borderland as a blank slate on which to write his commercial story. Lester reached into Notre Dame Bay during its formative commercial period to establish an important satellite facility there at Tilting, where he inserted large numbers of Irish servants and passengers.³ Lester sought the same commodities in the region as did merchants like Slade and Coghlan, but for Lester the region was one part of a more spatially diverse business system, where for Slade during these years, it was all about the borderland. Lester emerges from both his diaries and from colonial sources as a measured individual with a structured business system who

³ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 30 October 1770.

was comfortable with, and aspired to join the ranks of, elites. In contrast, Slade was a creature of the borderland, comfortable breaking rules and manipulating others, such as when he tried to compel the French captain to stop fishing on Sundays. The only public functions that Slade ever performed were that of fishing admiral for Twillingate in 1770, and then naval officer for that harbour in 1774, both of which can be viewed as sinecures. Lester assumed more dignified roles. In 1750 Governor Drake appointed Lester as a Justice of the Peace for Trinity.⁴ He negotiated the surrender of the town when French forces invaded in 1762.⁵ After the war he worked closely in seeing that the French would be discouraged from retaking harbours in Notre Dame and Bonavista Bays, and entered into an arrangement with Governor Byron to build two smaller boats for the Navy's use in patrolling the Newfoundland coast.⁶ On 4 July 1772 Lester wrote to Governor Shuldham reporting on French activity in the Bonavista-Greenspond area. He adopted the tone of a concerned senior merchant and informed the governor that French fishing activity was almost certainly contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht.⁷

Benjamin Lester's father Francis had been a cooper and shipowner in Poole and had been mayor of that town in 1716. The father was engaged in the Newfoundland trade

⁴ The National Archives of the United Kingdom: Public Record Office, Colonial Office Series 194 (hereafter PRO CO 194) vol. 25 f 60, "Names of the Justices of the Peace in the several Districts of Newfoundland," 26 December 1750.

⁵ D. F. Beamish, "Lester, Benjamin," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter *DCB*), ed. Frances G. Halpenny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5: 490.

⁶ The National Archives of the United Kingdom: Public Record Office, Admiralty and Ministry of Defence, Navy Department: Correspondence and Papers Series 1 (hereafter PRO ADM 1) vol. 470 f 87-88, "John Byron, HMS *Panther* to Phillip Stevens, Esq.," 14 November 1771; PRO ADM 1/470 f 145-145v, "Governor Molyneux Shuldham to Phillip Stevens, Esq.," 26 November 1772.

⁷ PRO CO 194/30 f 103, "Benjamin Lester, Esq. to His Excellency Governor Molyneux Shuldham," 4 July 1772.

in the 1730s. Lester's mother Rachel was from the old Newfoundland merchant family the Taverners; Benjamin Lester married his cousin Susannah Taverner in Trinity, and thereby solidified his place in the firmament of Newfoundland codfish merchants.⁸ For his part, John Slade was the orphaned son of a bricklayer and was apprenticed into the marine trades as a boy, though he did marry the daughter of a prominent Newfoundland merchant.⁹ Lester's career was closely associated with the town and port of Trinity in the northern reaches of the English shore, so he was in a prime position to understand the new opportunities that were emerging north of Bonavista in the late 1730s and 1740s when he entered the Newfoundland trade. Lester quickly recognized the value to be realized in commodities other than cod such as seals, salmon, furs and feathers and worked hard to incorporate these into his overall Atlantic trade. A note in Lester's diary from later in the century illustrates the multi-commodity attraction that Notre Dame Bay held for Lester:

Rec'd a Letter from Capt. Cheater - Fogo...saying that they had a very hard Winter, no Seals caught in the netts, not 15 tons in all, for Fogo, Twillingate, & Tilting harbor, that the Crews were not then returned from the Norward Ice Bound, That they had secured the Salmon Brooks &c., &c., no cod fish seen yet.¹⁰

Benjamin Lester and his Atlantic career have not escaped the attention of scholars. Jerry Bannister has pointed out the ways in which Lester's commercial and social world bridged the ocean and was defined by it, and Gordon Handcock has outlined

⁸ D. F. Beamish, "Lester, Benjamin," in *DCB*, 5: 490-92.

⁹ W. Gordon Handcock, "Slade, John," in *DCB*, 4: 711, 713. Marzagalli's observation that the entire French Atlantic mercantile system "was based upon kinship and family networks" applies equally to English merchants: Silvia Marzagalli, "The French Atlantic," *Itinerario* 26, no. 2 (1999), 80.

¹⁰ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 27 June 1790.

the mechanics of Lester's system of labour recruitment, as well as the spatial framework of his Newfoundland operations. The present work will delve more into the commercial personality of Lester and the strategies he employed in the borderland.¹¹ Lester was one of a large group of eighteenth-century "international thinkers and actors" who viewed the world in terms of markets to satisfy.¹² He knew the Atlantic and its structures, both natural and man-made. The winter crossing in the *Dolphin* was no reckless act. Lester knew that the single-masted sloop with its speed, tight profile and facility for sailing into the wind would get him through winter storms far faster than the lumbering, slow-moving convoy out of St. John's. In fact, Lester probably missed the convoy on purpose, in order to cross the ocean on his own time and at his own peril. By the time he stopped making the annual trip to Newfoundland, in 1776, he had made the Atlantic crossing approximately forty times.

ii. The Borderland Opportunity

Lester's entry into the Newfoundland trade corresponded to the time when the northern seal fishery was attracting entrepreneurs from the increasingly crowded English

¹¹ Jerry Bannister, "Citizen of the Atlantic: Benjamin Lester's Social World in England, 1768-69," *Aspects / The Newfoundland Quarterly*, 38 no. 3 (Fall 2003): 32-37; W. Gordon Handcock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women: Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 1989), *passim*; Gordon Handcock and Alan G. Macpherson, "Trinity, 18th Century," in *From the Beginning to 1800*. Vol. 1 of *The Historical Atlas of Canada*, ed. R. Cole Harris (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Plate 26.

¹² David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25.

Shore.¹³ By the time he was operating in Trinity in the 1750s, the potential of the seal fishery was well known and it was an easy decision for Lester to incorporate that trade into his business. Lester's point of entry into the borderland was the sheltered, spacious harbour at Tilting, which bore a close resemblance to George Cartwright's description for the ideal location of a sealing post:

As Seals always migrate from the North towards the South, that they may find an open Sea during the Winter, the proper places to catch them at are on the South side of a Bay and near to the mouth of it, or between an island and the Continent upon a straight shore. It must be sufficiently exposed to the sea to prevent its being frozen up soon, but not so much exposed to it as to cause the sea to break so heavily upon the shore as to wash and tear the nets; and if it is formed by an Island, that should not be at a greater distance from the Continent than sixty, or at the most seventy fathoms, nor less than twenty; nor should the depth of water be more than six fathoms, nor less than three.¹⁴

Joseph Banks described similarly ideal locations for setting seal nets in his 1766 journal: a narrow passage between two islands.¹⁵ The shore on either side of the entrance to the harbour at Tilting faces uniformly northeast. Pigeon Island, never inhabited, blocks the mouth of the harbour leaving a small channel or "tickle" which provides access to the harbour from the southeast or the northwest. On their southward late autumn migrations the seals would strike the coast of Fogo Island and head east and south. Some of them would be funneled between the coast and Pigeon Island and thus enter a killing zone where fleets of nets would bar their exit from the tickle. A close study of the Lester diary

¹³ C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A Geographer's Perspective* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 74-77.

¹⁴ Marianne P. Stopp, *The New Labrador Papers of Captain George Cartwright* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 98.

¹⁵ Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL): MG 253.1, Joseph Banks, "Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland...." (typescript), 46.

indicates that there was a sealing post very close to Tilting, and that sealing was one of his principal reasons for establishing a commercial presence there.¹⁶

The value of Tilting extended beyond seals to other species. The continental shelf off Tilting is particularly expansive. The neritic zone off the northeast coast of Fogo Island is the second largest in Newfoundland.¹⁷ This allowed for excellent cod fishing grounds in the immediate area of the settlement. Tilting's location on Fogo Island, which sits astride Gander Bay at the mouth of the Gander River, put it close to a prime salmon river. Salmon, seals and cod were commodities that could be processed and marketed with Lester's existing capital infrastructure of ships, warehouses and other facilities. The three main fisheries required the same collection of skills at which his existing workers and artisans excelled, such as making and maintaining nets and ropeworks, cooperage, carpentry in a seacoast environment, boatbuilding and repair, small-craft seamanship and navigation, basic woodcraft, and winter survival skills. Tilting was one of a small number of navigable borderland harbours located close to valuable biological resources. In 1786 Lester was listed in a report on the northern salmon fisheries as having four salmon posts within the wider precincts of Notre Dame Bay: Freshwater Bay, Indian Bay, Indian Arm and Dog Bay. Slade also had a post at Dog Bay (part of Gander Bay, in the borderland) and the two merchants' crews clashed there two years later.¹⁸ In 1788 Lester wrote in his

¹⁶ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 27 June 1790.

¹⁷ The *neritic* or *sublittoral* zone is the part of the ocean extending from the low tide mark to the edge of the continental shelf. The largest neritic zone is the area off the southeast coast of the Avalon Peninsula.

¹⁸ PRO CO 194/36, f 173v, Governor John Elliot to Lord Sydney, Secretary of State, "An Account of the Salmon Fisheries erected and carrying on in the following places

diary that Slade's men were "opposing" his own at Dog Bay and had done physical damage to one of Lester's salmon posts.¹⁹

The borderland offered secondary commodities and materials that were needed at the Trinity base but which were no longer available in significant volumes or in proximity to the Trinity headquarters. Lester carried hay, for example, from Tilting to Trinity to supply the livestock he kept there.²⁰ As a new, sparsely settled locale, the meadows and downs beyond the harbour in Tilting offered numerous open locations for the raising of hay and root crops. The long, bleak winters in the north necessitated that from the earliest days of settlement at Tilting the production of both hay and hay storehouses was a feature of the annual labour cycle. Similarly, as seen above in the case of John Slade, Lester used the many inlets in Notre Dame Bay as venues for the harvesting of the large volumes of lumber required to operate a large eighteenth century fishing concern.²¹ The movement of materials went both ways.

Lester's diaries expose the complexity of the Trinity-based business system and the emergence of Tilting as a major outpost. Lester had to know about and direct a multitude of tasks, from finding bait to navigation among the different outharbours, locating firewood and hay, keeping an eye on the French, sending the doctor off when needed, burying the dead, monitoring all the outharbours and keeping them provisioned, and much more. Salt had to be positioned in the producing harbours at the correct time in

upon the Coast of the Island of Newfoundland in the year 1786," 25 November 1786; DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 19 July 1788.

¹⁹ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, July 19, 1788.

²⁰ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 1 September 1770.

²¹ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 26 May 1770.

the appropriate volumes, and passengers had to be delivered to the right places within the constraints of wind, weather and work rhythms. The scheduling and management of the coastal sloops used for most of the intra-system journeys related to delivering supplies and people was an important element of Lester's job and was informed by a steady stream of short letters and notes arriving in Trinity on his own and other ships from the managers of his various outposts.

In addition to constant communications from his own clerk at Tilting, Lester received frequent letters from other contacts within the borderland, informing him of business conditions, the progress of the fishing season, legal actions and conflicts, the movements of his friends and competitors and other matters. He appeared to be constantly on the move during the summer and fall at Newfoundland, speaking to people, making notes and diary entries, and checking conditions in the field. On top of all this, there was a wider Atlantic world that Lester needed to know about, and his diaries show a preoccupation with matters far beyond the relatively constrained geography of Trinity, Bonavista and Notre Dame Bays. A particular set of concerns related to conditions in the markets for dried cod in southern Europe. A letter survives wherein Benjamin Lester complained bitterly to his English Lisbon agents about their poor performance in getting Lester optimal returns for his cargo of fish. It appears the Portuguese buyers convinced Lester's agents that the fish was of a low quality when Lester insisted that it was of at least middling quality.²² Lester's notable business success is testament to his ability to manage all of these tasks while maintaining strong connections to England, where he

²² DHC: D/LEG/B7, Draft letter from Benjamin Lester to his agent (unnamed) at Oporto, [1781], n/f.

performed the important work of political lobbying during the winter season he spent in Poole. He spent a lot of time traveling between Poole and London, and while part of this activity was dedicated to socializing and leisure pursuits, a significant amount of his time was spent in meeting insurers, brokers and bankers.²³

The procurement of good workers was a major concern of Lester throughout his Newfoundland years. Hancock has explained how Lester and other Newfoundland merchants procured many of their young workers from the English hinterlands of the port towns of Poole, Exeter, Bournemouth and other places.²⁴ The system could have its problems, as the merchants were at the mercy of their agents in the countryside. In 1782, Benjamin Lester wrote a letter to a Church of England vicar who had sent one of the poor young boys of his parish to Lester, a common method of labour recruitment that was seen as a way to reform unfortunate or troubled teenaged boys. The boy apparently carried some type of skin infection or parasite, which eventually infected all his coworkers.

Lester wrote to Rev. Gilbert Langdon:

Poole April 13th 1782
The Rev'd Mr. Gilbert Langdon
Sir.

It is not a little remarkable that you should so entirely forget the decorum & propriety which ought to mark the conduct of a man in your Situation of Life.

The disrespectful tenor of your Letter deserves my Contempt & is unworthy my notice, it's Strange amidst all the appearance of your Humanity, [that] you should be the Instrument of sending me a poor ragged creature destitute of every necessary, & Loaded with the Itch if you had been the only sufferer, he should immediately have been sent back. As it is you give me Occasion to retort on you by observing [that] you

²³ Bannister, "Citizen of the Atlantic," 32-37.

²⁴ Hancock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women*, 185-196 for a discussion of the recruitment practices for the Newfoundland fishery.

have read that Old fashion'd book to very little purpose, or the adage you speak of, would have been more attended to. I know of no Compensation you can make me for being the means of giving this Vile disorder to a whole Ships Company.

There are to[o] many Instances in your own Parish of the good Intentions of my Conduct, to need my comments on the subject of your reflection, I have at present only to desire, that when you do me the Honor of another Letter, you will spare yourself the trouble of being Impertinent.

I am Sir Yours &c. &c.

BL²⁵

Personnel concerns could extend beyond the health of the workers. In 1782 he noted his concern that one of his men, George, had gone to see a Methodist preacher in Poole.

Lester forbid the man to go again, under threat of being fired, and upon investigation into the matter found that "the wife was the first that went."²⁶ There were many things to worry about.

iii. Lester and the Tilting Irish

The European population of the three principal borderland harbours increased quite rapidly after the first settler arrived in 1728. As early as 1740 there were 80 fishing boats operating out of Fogo and Twillingate, whereas long-established regions such as Trinity Bay and Conception Bay had about 100 each.²⁷ This represents a veritable flood of fishing entrepreneurs and servants. The wintering population, the true measure of settlers, was 110 for Fogo and 148 for Twillingate in 1751. By 1755 the numbers were

²⁵ DHC: D/LEG/X3, 17 April 1782, Benjamin Lester to Rev. Mr. Gilbert Langdon.

²⁶ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 9 December 1788.

²⁷ PRO CO 194/10 f 116, Capt. Taverner to the Board of Trade, "Scheme of the Fishery of Newfoundland at a Minimum yearly from 1736 to 1739," 14 February 1740. This Scheme was not one of the annual omnibus reports by the naval governor of Newfoundland to the Board of Trade, but was rather a private report by William Taverner of Poole, a merchant and longstanding advocate of the Newfoundland trade.

155 and 118 respectively, but thereafter, a period of rapid growth ensued, during the Seven Years' War, and by 1759 there were 397 residents at Fogo and 379 at Twillingate.²⁸ In the 1750s, the Newfoundland governors began recording the numbers of Irish throughout the Island, and these statistics show a growing population of Irish in Notre Dame Bay, at Fogo and Tilting, though not, it appears, at Twillingate. The first year for which statistics on the Irish in Notre Dame Bay exist is 1758; in that year there were 44 Irish men, women and children at Fogo and 28 at "Tilting and Twillingate." By 1767, after the war this number had ballooned to 499 Irish people in Fogo and Tilting together. Even allowing for imperfect statistical collection in the earlier years, it is plain that during the war, large numbers of Irish moved to Tilting and Fogo to settle, many of them under the auspices of Benjamin Lester. By 1767, Lester had installed William Ryan, the Irish agent, at Tilting. This was part of a wider strategy on Lester's part to bring Irish passengers and skilled labourers to Tilting in order to settle them in the harbour and then supply them with goods in return for processed commodities and derivative products.

A key part of Lester's strategy for the peopling of Notre Dame Bay was the bustling passenger business that he operated between Trinity/Tilting and Ireland. His ships the *Amy* and the *Bee* carried between 60 and 200 passengers from Waterford and

²⁸ PRO CO 194/13 f 23, Capt. Drake to the Lords of Trade, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry for 1751, 22 November 1751; PRO CO 194/13 f 197, Governor Dorrill to the Lords of Trade, Report on the state of the Newfoundland Fishery for 1755, 22 January 1756; PRO CO 194/14 f 41, Governor Edwards to the Lords of Trade, Scheme of the fishery for 1759, 25 January 1760. The CO 194 statistics should be taken as estimates, due to the inefficiency of information-gathering and reporting.

Youghal each year. In 1762 he was charging £3 per passenger.²⁹ The years around 1770 were the peak for this Irish passenger trade. The usual pattern was that the *Amy* and the *Bee* sailed into Trinity and a number of the Irish passengers disembarked there, before a group of them were brought quickly to Tilting. Gordon Handcock estimated that Lester's ships executed between 50 and 100 individual sailings per year between the Trinity base and Tilting in the 1760s.³⁰ On 29 May 1770, for example, a Lester ship arrived from Youghal with 100 passengers, and the next day Lester sent 50 "hands" up to Tilting. From his diaries it is evident that his preferred port of operation in Ireland was Waterford, though there is an important subsidiary role played by nearby Youghal. The following entries are typical:

May 29, [1770]: "Capt. [Grates] arrived from Youghal 100 passengers..."³¹

May 30, [1770]: "...sent away Mr. Bryan in the Sloop and a Shallop to Tilting Harbour, with 50 hands in all..."³²

These are large numbers of men for Lester to have been sending to a single location, even for the beginning of the fishing season. Tilting was rapidly settled, over a period of less than a decade, by groups of men and women specifically associated with Lester's business ventures. Whereas communities along the old English Shore had seen prolonged inflows of people, as well as considerable turnover as settlers moved to new

²⁹ DHC: D/LEG/F2, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 1, 7 November 1762.

³⁰ Handcock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women*, 223. Handcock's methodology was to count the number of sailings mentioned in Lester's personal diary for the period under study. The method could very easily understate the number of sailings so the figures should be seen as a minimum, as there could have been numerous other sailings that Lester failed to record.

³¹ DHC: D/LEG/3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 29 May 1770.

³² DHC: D/LEG/3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 30 May 1770.

locations seeking better opportunities, Notre Dame Bay received a concentrated demographic boost during and after the Seven Year's War. The preponderance of borderland Irish settlement came in the period between 1756 and 1770.

For the first several years of Lester's interest in Tilting, the context and frequency of his mentioning of the name of one "Mr. Maguire" imply that perhaps this man served as his first representative agent there.³³ By 1768, however, it is clear that William Ryan was taking care of Lester's Tilting interests. Ryan was as the enactor of Lester's commercial strategy at Tilting. He traveled back and forth to Ireland some years with the passengers and might have acted as a recruiting agent for Lester in southern Ireland.³⁴ Ryan, and apparently Maguire before him, provided Lester in Trinity with intelligence on weather conditions and commodity-species appearance or lack of same. He also reported on the activity of planters and fishers both in Tilting and at the other two big borderland harbours, and of course managed Lester's truck relationships with resident planters, recording their debits of provisions and gear against credits for salmon, seals and cod.³⁵ Finally, he managed the work of Lester's own servants at the Tilting facility. If the operations of the Slade salmon and sealing posts can be understood as standard ones for that era, Lester's Tilting facility probably had between five and ten workers fishing and processing fish, and performing tasks related to the running a cod fishing post, including salting, drying and storing the cod, cooperage, cod oil production and related tasks.

³³ DHC: D/LEG/F2, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 18 May 1762; 19 May 1762; 4 July 1762; 9 July 1762; 4 August 1762; 21 November 1762; 22 November 1762.

³⁴ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 20 October 1770; 2 November 1770; 6 November 1770; 29 May 1771; 30 May 1771.

³⁵ There are no surviving ledgers for the Lester operations.

Lester's competencies in the hiring and placement of Irish passengers and workers at Tilting should be viewed within the overall context of increased Irish migratory outflows in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Newfoundland Irish were a small part of much larger demographic movements from Old World to New. The Irish were, as a group, the most numerous Atlantic migrants when measured as a percentage of their home country population.³⁶ Though Newfoundland saw far fewer Irish migrants than the Caribbean, their presence in Newfoundland is significant in that they were the majority of the population at various times and places during the eighteenth century.³⁷ John Mannion's pioneering research on the Newfoundland Irish answers most questions on both the origins of this community and the role they played in Newfoundland society up to the nineteenth century.³⁸ The movement of Irish labourers to the doorway Atlantic

³⁶ L.M. Cullen, "The Irish Diaspora of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 112-149.

³⁷ Hilary Beckles, "A 'riotous and unruly lot': Irish Indentured Servants and Freemen in the English West Indies: 1644-1713" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 47, no. 4 (October 1990): 503-522; John C. Appleby, "English Settlement in the Lesser Antilles during War and Peace, 1603-1660" in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), 93.

³⁸ John Mannion, "Irish Migration and Settlement in Newfoundland: The Formative Phase, 1697-1732," *Newfoundland Studies* 17, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 257-293; John Mannion, "Old World Antecedents, New World Adaptations: Inistioige Immigrants in Newfoundland," in *Kilkenny: History and Society, Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (Dublin, Geography Publications, 1990), 345-404; Mannion, "The Waterford Merchants and the Irish-Newfoundland Provisions Trade, 1770-1829," in *Négoce et Industrie en France et en Irlande aux XVIII^e et XIX^e Siècles*, ed. Louis. M. Cullen and P. Butel (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1980), 27-43; Mannion, "Vessels, Masters, and Seafaring: Patterns in Waterford Voyages, 1766-1771," in *Waterford: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. William Nolan and Thomas Power (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1992), 373-402; Mannion, "A

ports of Waterford and Cork, as well as lesser harbours such as Youghal, was closely related to the export from Ireland of provisions to Newfoundland, America, and the Caribbean.³⁹ They were part of a "Green Atlantic" of Irish exiles, merchants, artisans and labourers who moved through the Atlantic system in large numbers and had an important impact on the cultures of burgeoning colonies and, in the case of Newfoundland, fisheries.⁴⁰ Lester simply tapped into this pre-existing demographic outflow to populate the borderland with European workers and, importantly, consumers of trade goods. Lester's oldest brother, Francis Jr., converted to Catholicism around 1725. This is an interesting event which may have shaded his brother Benjamin's open attitude later on to employing large numbers of Irish Catholics.⁴¹ It may also be significant that one of Lester's first two employers in the Newfoundland trade was an Irishman, Michael Ballard.⁴²

Lester's carrying of large numbers of Irish passengers and workers directly from Ireland to Trinity and Notre Dame Bays added an additional robust cultural element to

Transatlantic Merchant Fishery: Richard Welsh of New Ross and the Sweetmans of Newbawn in Newfoundland 1734-1862," in *Wexford, History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. Kevin Whelan (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1987), 373-421; Mannion, *Irish Merchants Abroad: The Newfoundland Experience, 1750-1850*, *Newfoundland Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 127-190.

³⁹ John Mannion, "Victualling a Fishery: Newfoundland Diet and the Origins of the Irish Provisions Trade, 1675-1700," *International Journal of Maritime History* 12, no. 1 (June 2000): 1-60.

⁴⁰ Kevin Whelan, "The Green Atlantic: Radical Reciprocities between Ireland and America in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216-238.

⁴¹ DHC: D/LEG/F1, various letters. The conversion of Francis Jr., to the Catholic Church was a cause of great concern to his parents.

⁴² Beamish, "Lester, Benjamin," *DCB*, 5: 491.

the complexion of northern Newfoundland and the borderland. While there were other Irish men working in Notre Dame Bay before Lester's operation commenced, the concentration on Tilting and the direct shipping links between the Bay and Ireland provided a temporally and spatially concentrated volume of Irish migrants into the heart of the borderland. Genealogical research on the Tilting Irish has indicated that they were typical of those who populated other parts of Newfoundland in the late eighteenth century.⁴³ They were creative and energetic economic actors who adapted to a unique cultural and environmental milieu as part of generalized Irish and European migrations in the eighteenth century. The Tilting Irish who became planters and operated successful family fishing concerns can hardly be seen as potentially seditious economic refugees, as they were frequently characterized by British naval officials of the day.⁴⁴ Practical

⁴³ John Mannion and Gordon Handcock, "Origins of the Newfoundland Population, 1836," in *The Land Transformed, 1800-1891*, vol. 2 of *The Historical Atlas of Canada*, ed. R. Louis Gentilcore, et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Plate 8; Elsewhere, John Mannion has tabulated the known origins for a sub-set of Irish migrants to Newfoundland in the period 1790-1850:

	<u>no. people</u>	<u>percentage</u>
Kilkenny	1,636	25
Wexford	1,529	24
Waterford	1,319	20
Tipperary	1,021	16
		85
Cork	392	6
Other Ireland	~580	9
	~5900	100

Source: John Mannion, "The Irish Migrations to Newfoundland," (lecture, Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John's, Newfoundland, October 23, 1973). See also individual family histories in John Greene, *Off Fish and Family: Family Histories and Family Trees of Tilting, Set Against a Background of Historical Developments in the Newfoundland Fisheries, 1700-1940* (St. John's, NL: Triumphant Explorations, 2003).

⁴⁴ See as an example PRO CO 194/9 f 152, Governor Clinton to the Lords of Trade, Report on the administration of justice at Newfoundland, 4 April 1732.

English merchants like Slade and Lester supplied the Tilting Irish planters with guns, powder and shot, seemingly with no concern about sedition or insurrection.

As Tilting evolved into more of a consolidated Irish Atlantic community during the 1770s and 1780s, the social structure of the community began to solidify. Extant sources all point to the formation of an order of settled Irish planters in Tilting in the years following the Seven Years' War. Previous Irish residents had primarily been fishing servants in the employ of English planters like William Chalk, who was involved in a dispute with an Irish servant-employee in 1759.⁴⁵ Eventually, Irish planters began to establish their own fishing operations. Thomas Burke from Dungarvan in County Waterford is an example of this type of entrepreneurial Irishman. Burke emerged as the principal Irish planter in the community by the 1760s. Burke arrived in Tilting early, in 1752, well before the wartime boom in migrants.⁴⁶ This early arrival would also explain Burke's comparatively strong economic status in the years after the war, and the fact that his premises were situated in the prime location beside a fresh water stream and adjacent to prime anchorages in the harbour. In later years his rank in the community was expressed in the form of address the merchant awarded him: Mr. Thomas Burke.⁴⁷ When he died in Tilting in 1811, Burke left an estate valued at £300 sterling.⁴⁸ Burke's accounts with Slade indicate that he traded with them only in sundries, as he operated large ships and carried his fish, seal skins and oil directly to larger transshipment centres

⁴⁵ MHA/KMNF: C-142A, William Chalk.

⁴⁶ PANL: MG 410, Diary of John Burke, Tilting.

⁴⁷ As an example, see: PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, 1782-4 Ledger, ff. 113.

⁴⁸ MHA/KMNF, B-559, Thomas Burke Name File, "Last Will and Testament of Thomas Burke," 5 September 1806.

such as Trinity or St. John's. What prevented Burke from achieving the status of merchant, however, was that he never carried his fish or seals to the European markets; he depended on Benjamin Lester for that. A local historian has compiled a list of 26 planters, the majority of whom were Irish, who operated in Tilting during the eighteenth century.⁴⁹

Burke dealt with Benjamin Lester and Lester considered himself to be Burke's main supplier, at least for several years in the late 1760s and early 1770s.⁵⁰ In 1770, in conjunction with his neighbour Patrick Murray, Burke withheld a part of his year's product, selling Lester only that amount which served to square his account with Lester. Murray had a large fishing plantation employing "20 or 30 men" and can be classified as an independent Irish planter, on a par with his English neighbours and Burke.⁵¹ When the Irish planters withheld their fish, Lester instructed his agent, William Ryan, to "seize [all] Bourk and Murrays effects."⁵² A week later the issue was settled and it appears that Ryan was able to convince Burke and Murray to give over all their fish. What is noteworthy about this incident is not that the merchant prevailed in the end, because in 1770 Slade had not yet grown large enough to offer a substantial alternative to Lester. Lester's only true competition in the Bay was the energetic but overstretched Jeremiah Coghlan, who would soon be bankrupt. The true message in the Burke-Murray act of

⁴⁹ Greene, *Of Fish and Family*. John Greene commenced his oral history interviews in 1963.

⁵⁰ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 6 October 1770; 7 October 1770; 16 October 1770.

⁵¹ PRO CO 194/36 f 108, Patrick Murray to the Court of Admiralty (London), "The Memorial of Patrick Murray, Boat Keeper in Tilton Harbor Newfoundland," 3 January 1784.

⁵² DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 16 October 1770.

commercial mischief is that they tried it at all. If these men were in a state of complete dependence on Lester for their "winter's diet" they would never have tried this act of insolence. Though they ultimately failed, they were able to attempt this resistance because they had options which did not exist for simple fishing servants. Both men had families and servants, and operated substantial planter fisheries. They would not have risked alienating the merchant if they did not think some gain could be bargained out of Lester. The episode shows the degree to which Lester was dependant upon resident planters for much of his supply.

It is also interesting that Burke and Murray acted in concert. One interpretation of this is that they sensed there was some additional weight in their acting as a "combination," to use the terminology of the day. If there had been hundreds of planters in the area, their action would have been merely a source of irritation to Lester, but since in fact there were only a few dozen functioning planters, at most, the threat of depriving Lester of their full catch was expected to have more weight. Lester's response, ordering the unilateral seizure of their effects, confirms how in this northern location with its relative lack of legal infrastructure, the merchant could exercise paralegal powers.

iv. Summary

It is in the formation of the Irish community at Tilting that we see the value to Benjamin Lester of the Notre Dame Bay borderland. There were three essential conditions of the borderland that encouraged Tilting's birth and growth. First, the special legal and commercial character of the region in the years following 1763, as a place where there were no pre-existing claims or social structures on land other than those of

the Beothuk, encouraged certain forms of European extractive mercantile activity. Since French claims were legally strong but practically abandoned due to a lack of permanent onshore settlements, the borderland was virgin territory in terms of the style and intensity of English merchant activity and associated settlement flows. The migratory nature of the French fishery rendered it fragile: they couldn't withstand locational competition, especially in a borderland environment where they were required to contend with both expansionist Englishmen and a native Beothuk population who were intent on defending their land. For their part, Irish passengers and entrepreneurs found it easy to establish fishing rooms and associated social structures over a brief period of only two or three decades in this newly opened region where pre-existing European claims were seemingly slight. Lester underwrote Irish population flows because for him the Bay was a *tabula rasa* where he could install both his particular style of merchant capital as well as the human capital required to move the plan forward.

Second, the borderland was a place of mental and cultural openness for Atlantic Irish travelers. Whereas in the West Indies or Virginia there existed philosophical and political barriers to the implantation of an Irish micro-society, in the borderland there were no effective prevailing systems of theological or political opposition to the Irish. It is particularly noteworthy that their commercial sponsor, Lester, seemed not to subscribe to prevailing norms of British bigotry. Therefore the Irish who landed at Tilting probably felt a sense of cultural freedom that meshed comfortably with the fact that the land was free, fishing grounds were numerous, and the Beothuk were staying away. The borderland's inconstant character proved to be, in fact, fertile ground for the Atlantic

Irish. Small freedoms like the ability to carry a gun, strictly proscribed for Catholics in Ireland at that time, likely gave the Tilting Irish a profound sense of satisfaction.

Finally, situated as it was commercially and physically in close proximity to early modern Atlantic communications in the form of shipping lanes and trade flows, Notre Dame Bay Irish migrants were in closer contact with the resources of the European core than might otherwise be evident. Tilting and other borderland settlements existed within the orbit of a swirling Atlantic system of ideas and enterprise, and thus the availability of settlement opportunities was communicated into the Atlantic quickly, and settlers arrived with equal rapidity.

Chapter Seven

Work and Community in the Borderland

i. Introduction

The borderland imposed its own rhythms of work on the labourers and families who spent time there or who went there to settle. Various fish and animal species in different volumes dictated the ebb and flow of the working calendar as compared to the traditional cod fishery on the old English Shore. Though patterns of work and commerce became harmonized with the rest of the island in the early nineteenth century, principally through merchant concentration on the cod fishery, the early decades of the borderland were characterized by a wide variety of extractive commercial pursuits and a high degree of social and occupational fluidity. In fact, the focus on cod production that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century should be seen as one of the markers for the end of the borderland period. A distinctly English and Irish society alone emerged out of the borderland period, due to the decline of the Beothuk and the withdrawal of the French. Though all of the fluid social orders that composed communities in the rest of eighteenth century Newfoundland existed as well in early Notre Dame Bay English communities, borderland conditions dictated the particular script that community formation would take there. Ironically, in these final years of communal stress, when their rivers and shores were being increasingly infiltrated, the Beothuk were drawn into some final acts of conflict with English and Irish settlers. In turn, Beothuk proximity called for certain

forms of collective defence and community leadership on the part of incoming Europeans, albeit within an overall context of Native community decline.

Both the Slade ledgers and the Lester diaries provide a rich portrait of English-Irish life in early Notre Dame Bay. As mentioned in Chapter Three, there is nowhere near the same amount of documentary evidence for the French fishery, as it was specifically practiced in the Bay in the decades prior to, and including, the borderland period. In any case, the goal of the present work is to test the efficacy of the borderlands construct in illuminating the processes of historical change and community development in a liminal French-English and European-Native borderland. An understanding of the broad strokes of French involvement in the region will suffice to expose the processes of change that were particular to this region in eighteenth century Notre Dame Bay. For their part, the Beothuk voice can be heard only through an analysis of archaeological data and a few tantalizingly slight contact reports, in addition to the impressions that William Epps Cormack drew from his conversations with Shanawdithit.

A survey of the first ten years of account books in the Slade papers gives an approximate idea of the relative sizes of the various social groups in the borderland.¹ The resulting conclusions come with the caveat that to draw such information out of early modern commercial ledgers is an imprecise exercise. Between 1783 and 1792, there were 970 individuals and commercial entities named in the ledgers, which included 118 individuals who were mentioned in the accounts of others but who did not themselves

¹ Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL): MG 460, Slade Collection, Ledgers 1783 to 1792.

hold an account.² These non-account holders are generally engaged workers or “servants” who are the beneficiaries of credit notes from other, account-holding customers of Slade. There were three principal types of accounts: planters, servants, and other trading firms or mercantile entities. A mercantile entity is defined here as an account in the Slade ledgers held by another merchant or entrepreneur, large or small.

Planters are easily identified in the Slade accounts, since they tended to have more stable accounts and their production of seals, cod and other commodities against purchases of gear, staples and household items distinguished them from servants, whose purchases were far less varied. Approximately 10 percent of the 970 individuals in the ten-year sample period can be clearly identified as planters. In this category are a number of non-resident “boatkeepers” who migrated to the fisheries in the summer from England or Ireland and maintained an account with Slade but who did not reside in Notre Dame Bay. They can be tentatively identified through the absence of domestic or family-related purchases in the ledgers. Over the ten-year period, an average of approximately 52 percent of the individuals named in the Slade ledgers can be identified as servants in any given year, with the range running from 33 percent in 1783 to a high of 59 percent in 1789.

This leaves a remaining 45 percent of the individuals in the ledger books who cannot be identified as either planters or servants. This was arguably the most interesting group in the borderland. They were the craftsmen, artisans, account-holding wives of

² This number is an approximation of the full number of customers with whom Slade dealt. Some of the ledgers are damaged and may have lost pages. In addition, there was a lack of uniformity in spelling of surnames.

planters, small fishing and furring partnerships, short-term aspiring settlers, drifters and at least one doctor. The fact that they comprise almost half of the Slade accounts indicates resoundingly that English-Irish society at this time and place was occupationally dynamic and highly varied in its composition.

ii. Planters, Servants, Artisans and Providers of Services

Peter Pope proposed that in the seventeenth century Newfoundland fishery, planters were "the most distinctive residents."³ This was the case in the borderland as well. The picture that emerges in Notre Dame Bay supports the view of planters proposed by Keith Matthews, Gordon Handcock and Sean Cadigan: they were settlers who cut their ties to previous homelands and who performed an essential organizational role as producers in the fishery.⁴ Cadigan, writing on a different period for the longer-settled Conception Bay region, saw that it was ownership of productive capital gear that verified one's planter status. Then, as settlement solidified, the use of household labour became a key marker of planter status, with servants as a supplementary labour input.⁵ In the borderland too, the typical planter family consisted of the man or woman who headed

³ Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 261.

⁴ W. Gordon Handcock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women: Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 1989); Keith Matthews, "A History of the West of England," (D. Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1968); Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland, 1500-1830* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater, 1988); Sean Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

⁵ Cadigan, *Hope and Deception*, 37-38, 41.

the household, their children and sometimes other relatives or friends, and a fluid collection of engaged fishing workers, or servants.

Some planters sought to maximize their own profits through a variety of means, including dealing with different merchants or, when possible, withholding the balance of their production after the current season's supplier had been paid in order to seek better profits elsewhere. In early Tilting, for example, Benjamin Lester was not the only purchaser of made (processed) fish. Sack ships and general traders cruised the coast each year, looking for cargoes. Boston merchant Thomas Hancock's Newfoundland ships are a perfect example of this. As seen above, Thomas Burke in Tilting incurred the distaste of Benjamin Lester in 1770 when he and his neighbour Patrick Murray refused to offload all of their fish to Lester. Initially, they only settled with Lester in the amount necessary to cover outstanding debts. One interpretation of this event is that they were holding back the surplus amounts in a strategy of profit maximization.⁶ In the Slade ledgers, a picture of planters emerges which clearly defines them as junior competitors of merchants, within an overall context of unequal mutual dependence.⁷ There are signs that some planters engaged in petty trade, for example. Thomas Dwyer acquired 58 lbs of butter from Slade in 1799 and since it does not reappear in his account with Slade at a

⁶ Dorset History Centre (hereafter DHC): D/LEG/F3, 6 October 1770, 7 October 1770, 16 October 1770. For an example of a Hancock expedition to Newfoundland in search of fish, see Harvard Business School, Baker Library Historical Collections (hereafter BLHC): Hancock Papers, Box 10, Folder 1 "Government Instructions, orders to captains of transports, 1741-1748."

⁷ On this point, Cadigan points out that the truck system "represented a mutual, though unequal, accommodation between two basic classes: merchants and fish producers." See Cadigan, *Hope and Deception*, 101.

later date, there is a possibility that he was retailing it, or had sold it on to another operator, acting as a middle man.⁸

Servants can be easily identified through their accounts in the Slade ledgers: they received standardized wage rates, stated as such, and executed a minimum of purchases for staples, as they were provisioned and fed by their employers.⁹ There was no standard patten of engagement for these men. Many dozens of them spent a single year, or two, at the fishery and then disappeared from the ledgers. Some men, like Elias Newbury, returned to the fishery as servants year after year, and are stable for their predictable annual presence in the Slade books. Others, like William Gisop, spaced their time as servants into summer seasons separated by years of absence. Servants like Gisop appear to have worked in the fishery as an optional pursuit, when it fit into other, wider Atlantic patterns of labour.¹⁰ Gisop may have been connected to a tragedy in 1784. There is a notation in the ledgers that a John Gisop (the only other person in the ledgers with this rare English surname) and three other youngsters drowned. John and William Gisop appeared together in the ledgers in 1784, William for the first and last time. Were they brothers, and does William's non-appearance at the fishery the following year, followed by a resumption in 1786, mark the hesitation of one who had experienced personal tragedy in the trade?

⁸ Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter PANL): MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 7, 1799-1800 Ledger.

⁹ Thornton presented similar findings for the Labrador coast in the later 1820-1850 period; see Patricia Thornton, "The Transition from the Migratory to the Resident Fishery in the Strait of Belle Isle," *Acadiensis*, 19, 2 (Spring 1990): 110.

¹⁰ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, 1784, 1786, 1788, and 1789 Ledgers.

Borderland society was in a state of dynamic development in the years after Utrecht, and especially so after 1763. Occupational status could and did change. John Stoodley worked for two seasons as a servant but then appeared with his own account and planter-style transactions. As in the case of Thomas Burke, by 1791 Stoodley was recognized in the ledgers by the placement of the prefix "Mr." before his name, a marker of status only occasionally seen in the Slade accounts. However, mobility went both ways: John Burt was a planter, producing on his own account throughout the sample period until financial distress forced him to take work at servant's wages. Samuel Jacobs had a colourful and occupationally peripatetic career during the sample period, oscillating four times between planter and servant. He wrote bad bills of exchange in 1784 and 1785 and appears to have struggled to make a success of his producing life.¹¹

The Slade documents do allow for some conclusions regarding the place of servants in the overall borderland social complex. They were distinguished from planters in ways beyond the simple indentured status of their working lives. Unlike free planters, servants were unfree in the sense that they were legally bound to their merchant-employers for the duration of their work term. Some servants chose to resist. The servants' primary outlet for protest was to run away, but this was hard, especially in the region under study where the limited number of communities, and therefore the close connections between most mariners and the principal merchants, meant that it would be hard for a runaway to abscond by sea. Landward escape, into the soggy backcountry

¹¹ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Boxes 1-4, 1783-1792 Ledgers. The term "bankruptcy" is not used to describe planters and others who succumb to debts, as its modern meaning surrounds issues related to formal protection from creditors. This was not the case in eighteenth-century Newfoundland.

with its wolves and purportedly dangerous Beothuk population, was not an option. Even so, there are several cases of servants who “ran away,” to use the uniform clerical vocabulary of the ledgers. There were two forms of such desertion: a servant could run off in England or Ireland after having signed an indenture and presumably received a small advance wage; or escape from the borderland itself while in the employ of the merchant. William Daly appears to have traveled from Poole to Waterford at which point he absconded, as did George Randy. James Gauntlet similarly slipped away once the *Molly* docked in Waterford. Stephen Dundon inexplicably ran away with just two months remaining in his work term, at the end of his fourth season of work. William Pinkney also gave up early, and ran before his time was completed. John Perman took advantage of the French presence in the borderland region to run away “at Quirpon with the French” in 1791. William Wholler similarly left the boat at Quirpon and thus forfeited his wages. The proximity of French enterprise in the borderland apparently offered an escape option for adventurous servants. George Smith is unique for having run away in 1784 and then returned as a servant in 1787, though there is a chance that there are two men with the same, common fore- and surnames. Though it is impossible to discern whether these men were running to escape unhappy working lives or simply to seek new adventures, their stories do highlight the options that borderland labourers had in escaping their work contracts.¹²

The third broad social group to emerge out of the Slade ledgers are artisans and providers of services. They comprised almost half of the total accounts in the ten-year

¹² PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 2, 1784 Ledger; Box 2, 1786 Ledger; and Box 3, 1787 Ledgers.

sample period. The earliest ten years of surviving ledgers for Slade and Company, for the period 1783 to 1792, show the types of skilled trades workers who moved through the area.¹³ This information is listed often in indirect ways and is difficult to quantify, in terms of the proportions of people performing the various tasks. In most cases the function of the tradesperson is specifically mentioned in the ledgers, but in a few cases the occupation must be deduced from the types of transactions recorded. In any case, the borderland economy was focused on commodities harvesting and this is reflected in the service and skilled functions that were practiced. The functions can be broken into two general groups. In the first group were those occupations directly related to the salmon, seal and cod fisheries and other extractive activities. These included ship's carpenters, salmon catchers, boat's masters, trappers, or furriers. The second group was composed of those service occupations which supported the extractive trades: shoe maker, blacksmith, cooper, carpenter, surgeon, "doctor," laundress, and boarding house operator.¹⁴ These last two functions were performed exclusively by women. A generous definition of the term artisan thus takes in the labours of the women who performed, for compensation, such vital functions as washing clothes and ministering to sick planters and servants. In a labour schedule which allowed for little free time, such service tasks as laundering clothes were an important adjunct to the principal fishing and fish processing function. In the case of clothes laundering, the fishers themselves could not afford to

¹³ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Ledgers 1783 to 1792.

¹⁴ "Doctoring" should be viewed as distinct from the role of the surgeon. Surgeons were trained professionals who dealt with gravely ill people and performed operations like amputations. "Doctoring" dealt with simpler ailments and treatments, and the provision of medicines.

give up a good day's fishing to attend to shore-based tasks, and a good day for fishing was also a good day for washing. Women filled the void.

iii. Borderland Women

The most common ancillary jobs performed by women in support of the fisheries were laundry, boarding and doctoring activities. Laundry services were not a luxury, but rather an important part of the workflow in an industry where men's clothing, part of their productive gear, became soiled with blood, oil, fish innards and other detritus on a daily basis. Arthur Young reported from Ireland in the 1770s on the importance of clothes to migrant Newfoundland fishermen. The expense of replacement at Newfoundland was prohibitive, so they carried slops (work clothes) with them.¹⁵ To be kept operational, valuable clothing had to be kept clean and mended, the laundress's role. Indentures between merchants and their servants specified "washing" as part of their compensation, in addition to food and drink.¹⁶ Cartwright included a "Laundry Maid" in his list of required servants at coastal stations.¹⁷ Usually laundry services can be discerned in the Slade ledgers by the wife of a planter receiving repetitive credits of a uniform value in her account which are deposited by men, often servants. Servants were transient workers who, as situational bachelors, had to pay someone else to do their

¹⁵ Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland with General Observations on the Present State of that Kingdom: Made in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, and Brought Down to the End of 1779*, vol. 1 (1780, repr. Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970), 406.

¹⁶ BLHC: Hancock Papers, Box 6, "Thomas Handcock, Indentures, 1736." According to the terms of the indenture between Daniel McFall and Thomas Hancock, McFall was paid £20 in addition to "meat and drink" and washing for a year's service.

¹⁷ Marianne P. Stopp, *The New Labrador Papers of Captain George Cartwright* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 199.

laundry and mending.¹⁸ The wives of planters had this business under their control and had the skill and implements to perform the service. Borderland planters and their families were more settled in their domesticity than servants and as such performed an anchoring role in the community through the provision of certain services. Importantly, Slade was willing to formalize women's labours by letting the transactions pass through his ledgers. This shows how important the service was to the overall operation of the borderland economy and how Slade saw some planters' wives as trustworthy commercial correspondents.

In almost all cases, women who performed washing services appear to have had a husband who also had an account with Slade. Marital relationships were seldom specified in the ledgers, but a high degree of confidence can be placed in this conclusion due to the fact that in most cases the women's and men's accounts overlapped temporally. So, for example, Honora Boyd performed washing services in 1785, while her husband had an account as a planter from 1783 to 1786.¹⁹ In most cases laundresses can be easily paired in the ledgers with a planter husband: John and Hannah Mew, James and "Mrs." Skinner, and Sampson and Mary Cook. There are, however, cases of apparently solo women performing these services: Mrs. Bush had no corresponding planter husband in Slade's books. Mrs. Organ, similarly, boarded a Slade servant but there was no Mr. Organ.²⁰ This does not necessarily mean that the women were unmarried entrepreneurs. They could have been part of households where the planter

¹⁸ The word "transient" is used here to describe servants in the borderland fishery as impermanent, fixed-term workers.

¹⁹ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Boxes 1-3, 1783-1786 Ledgers.

²⁰ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 2, 1784 Ledger.

husband's account was held by a merchant other than Slade. There are two interesting cases of women who became quite commercially active upon the death of their husbands. Jacob Thomes died in 1787; later that year and for the following five years (of the ten year survey), Suzanna Thomes performed laundry services for Slade employees. Mary Symes took over her husband's account after he died in 1788, though the account was closed after two years. The two other functions beyond washing that women performed were the operation of boarding houses, with some frequency, and doctoring. The boarding function likely explains some percentage of the laundry services, as two roles were probably performed together. Similarly, doctoring or taking care of sick and injured workers can be seen as an extension or rather an enhancement of the boarding role. Dorothy Burton doctored patients in her home, but it is likely this was related to boarding functions she also performed.²¹

The case of Mary Symes is a particularly rich example of how gender, at least in this case, was no barrier to commercial activity and even occupational fluidity. John Symes, Mary's husband, was a substantial mercantile operator based in Fogo. He embraced the two major complementary fisheries in the borderland, seals and cod, and produced impressive quantities of made fish, train (cod) oil, seal skins and seal oil. In 1787, for example, he traded with Slade for 403 quintals of fish, 444 gallons of train oil, 455 gallons of seal oil, 200 seal skins and a skiff. This made him one of the largest producers in the borderland for that year. John Symes was also unique for having a second account with Slade, linked to his borderland account, called the "John Symes

²¹ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 1, 1783 Ledger; Box 2, 1784 Ledger; Box 2, 1785 Ledger; and Box 3, 1786 Ledgers.

English Account" which is composed of bulk purchases of supplies and small cash disbursements to other Notre Dame Bay planters and servants. Symes was therefore almost certainly a migratory boatkeeper, resident in England and fishing out of the borderland in the spring and summer months. He evidently left a crew *in situ* over the winter as well, as in 1788 he traded 341 feet of 2 inch plank to Slade.²² The other reason for concluding he was a boatkeeper was that his borderland account, though substantial, contained no purchases of household items, children's clothes, or the like. His acquisitions were all either food and drink (mainly rum) or tools, gear and supplies for the seal and cod fisheries.²³

John Symes died in 1788. He signed his Fogo account himself in October 1787 but in the fall of 1788, his wife Mary signed the account with an "X." She was then allowed to assume responsibility for the account. The next year, the account was continued under the name "Mrs. Symes." She employed a crew of four servants, as there is an entry for her paying the mandated Greenwich hospital insurance fees for four men, and there is a matching entry in the account of John Trigge, Esq. who appears to have been a labour agent or broker in Poole.²⁴

The tone of Mary's account changed in the year following her husband's passing. Though seal and cod production continued apace, she purchased large volumes of medicaments and remedies in a single large transaction with Slade in 1789 and appears to

²² Lumbering was almost exclusively a wintertime activity.

²³ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1786-87 Ledger f 55v, 56, 130v, 131; 1787-88 Ledger f 147v, 148, 167v, 168.

²⁴ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1787-88 Ledger f 167v, 168; 1789 Ledger, f 54; 1788-89 Ledger 72v, 73.

have been setting herself up in Fogo permanently. She may have begun practicing as a community physician as a way to make a living.²⁵ She also traded fresh beef to Slade in 1788 and 1789, in lots of 115 and then 114 lbs.²⁶ After her husband's death the purchases in her borderland and English accounts take on a distinctly domestic tone. In May of 1789 she placed a bulk order through her English account for a number of items which, all together, give the appearance of someone setting up a household. Shipped to her in Fogo aboard the *Hazard* in a barrel marked "MS" were a number of items including allspice, caraway seed, silk, apron tape and a dozen spoons. A widow now, she also ordered a black petticoat, black hose, and a pair of women's black shoes. Slade was happy to facilitate her activities through the continued extension of ample credit.²⁷

The presence of children and their mothers in the borderland, observable in the ledgers through planter purchases of children's clothing and shoes, raises an important question related to doctoring: the place of childbirth and midwifery. As soon as women came to the borderland, relationships formed and children appeared. It is therefore possible that some part of the doctoring role was in fact midwifery services performed for planters' wives and charged on planter's accounts.²⁸ When she set herself up as a healer, Mary Symes ordered two bottles of Godfrey's Cordial, an alcohol and opiate suspension used to treat children who were suffering from colic. It makes sense to propose that a woman who was stocking colic remedies was also involved in delivering

²⁵ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1789 Ledger f 73, 144, and 133.

²⁶ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1789 Ledger ff 73, 144.

²⁷ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1789 Ledger f 132v, 133.

²⁸ PANL: MG460, Slade Collection, 1789 Ledger f 73, 133 and 144. I am indebted to Emily Burton of Dalhousie University for alerting me to this possibility.

babies, since part of the midwife's role traditionally extended beyond the birthing process to caring for the mother and baby in the first months of the child's life.²⁹

In one particular type of transaction, however, women acted in a primary producing capacity and not in support of the all-male fishery. The "Berry Books" were small account books in which the account holders, mostly women, were given credit for the berries they harvested and brought to the Slade store. Slade paid one shilling per gallon, and the accounts were immediately crossed; in other words, credit was not given, but the account holders purchased goods on the same day for exactly the amount they received for their berries. On September 24, 1814, a woman listed in the ledgers as Mrs. Dwyer deposited nine gallons of berries and was credited for nine shillings, which she took away in the following form: a pair of shoes, a quarter pound of white thread, a half yard of print cloth and twelve needles. Two days later she was back, this time with nineteen gallons of berries for which she received in trade four and a half yards of print cloth, a pocket handkerchief, six laces and twelve cotton balls. In 1817 Mrs. Dwyer produced, most likely with children and grandchildren or in conjunction with other women, a total of 79 and a half quarts of berries, for which she took away cotton gowns, needles, ribbons, dishes and handkerchiefs.³⁰ The Berry Book accounts were reserved for women's labours, for which they purchased items related to their own interests and to the comfort of the home. A woman's sphere was the maintenance of the dwelling house.

²⁹ Willeen G. Keough has commented on the preeminent role of women in providing community healing services in a different part of Newfoundland during the period under study. See Willeen G. Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 124-129.

³⁰ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 34, "Berry Book."

This was another way in which planters stood apart from that two-thirds of the population who were either servants or non-planters. Women performed a vital role in the establishment of communities and the evolution of the servant-based fishery to a family fishery.

iv. The Eighteenth-Century Fishing Family

The story of the Notre Dame Bay borderland is also the history of family evolution on a New World frontier. The arrival of women and the birth and growth of children can be observed through the Slade ledgers through the types of purchases that appear in resident planter accounts. Families and family formation were the byproducts of a mercantile system that encouraged and facilitated the movement of migrant passengers into the Bay, but it was also a consequence of the credit and provisioning umbrella that the truck system offered. Truck removed some of the risk of family settlement in a bleak coastal boreal region. Newfoundland merchants had observed that a significant number of the passengers and servants whom they carried to the island would opt to make an attempt at settlement. Once those planters established families, there was a high chance that they would stay. Family formation thus is closely linked to the truck system as both a consequence and a goal of the truck system in a more general sense. Merchants simply catered to the desire of some fishermen to settle down and start families.

A family was not just a biological entity, but was a labour cluster physically located on fishing premises with a dwelling house, and had a planter at the centre. The planter's role as head of the family was signified by his holding of an account in the

merchant's ledger and thus his ability to gain access to credit. The Slade ledgers indicate that the principal planters had a collection of servants and relatives, as well as wives and children, gathered around them both spatially and economically. Testifying before Parliament in 1793, William Newman specifically stated that at Newfoundland, servants were considered part of the family for which they worked.³¹ The Chalk family in Tilting is a good example. The original Chalk planter, an Englishman, may have been the first settler in Tilting in the years after the 1713 Utrecht Treaty but before the wave of incoming migrants after the Seven Years' War.³² Local tradition places the first Chalk in Bird Island Cove near Bonavista in the early 1700s.³³ This supports the tradition of Notre Dame Bay's three principal communities as having been peopled by migrations from Bonavista in the 1720s and 1730s. There is a "Chalk's Hill" in Tilting, a sure sign of early residency by people of that family. William Chalk was the second generation of Chalks to operate a planter fishery in Tilting. He operated from at least 1759 until the 1790s, and was followed in the Slade accounts by Richard Chalk, most likely his son. William and his son Richard's accounts overlap for several years. William was involved in a dispute with an Irish servant-employee in 1759.³⁴ This is an important piece of information: it locates Irish servants in Tilting during the Seven Year's War, and it

³¹ House of Commons, *First Report from the Committee, appointed to enquire into the state of the Trade to Newfoundland*, 26th March, 1793, 392, 394.

³² John Greene, *Of Fish and Family: Family Histories and Family Trees of Tilting, Set Against a Background of Historical Developments in the Newfoundland Fisheries, 1700-1940* (St. John's, NL: Triumphant Explorations, 2003), 13-15.

³³ E. R. Seary, *Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), 90.

³⁴ Memorial University of Newfoundland, Maritime History Archive, Keith Matthews Name Files (hereafter MHA/KMNF): C-142A, William Chalk.

shows Chalk to have been part of a long-lived family planter operation in that harbour. By the 1780s, William Chalk's accounts with Slade show him to be a family man, procuring women's shoes, children's clothing and writing paper, among other domestic items, from Slade in return for fish and seal oil.³⁵ Importantly, Chalk was also linked in credit relationships to servants such as Peter Perry and George Smith, the runaway, who were his employees. The image thus emerges of a multigenerational planter household with servants and heirs all working together but with different wealth outcomes. There were concentric circles of involvement in the production of wealth through vernacular labour: The planter was at the centre, with his sons learning the trade and eventually assuming control of the operation. The planter's wife was also in the centre, in some cases involved in service or productive activities that left echoes in the merchant ledgers. Just outside the centre of the labour circle were multi-year servants and then, on the outer rim, single-year servant workers who, for whatever reason, had only a fleeting association with the planter in question. A servant could move closer to the centre by marrying the daughter of his planter-employer but a planter's own sons, if they chose to stay and work with their father, received preeminent status in extended fishing families.

The place of the fishing family as a key social construct was also reflected in the built environment they installed in borderland harbours. Since the cod fishery required large premises at the waterline, where drying structures and other outbuildings would be constructed, certain plots of land in the various harbours were coveted. Areas of sheltered flat land, near sources of fresh water but also close to prime anchorages, were

³⁵ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 2, 1784 Ledger; Box 2, 1785 Ledger; Box 4, 1788 Ledger.



Figure 7.1 Naval survey map of Fogo Harbour, 1787

Source: The National Archives of the United Kingdom: Public Record Office, War Office (hereafter PRO/WO) 78/721 (detail), "A Chart of the Island of Fogo On the Coast of Newfoundland Surveyed by Order of Vice Admiral Campbell Governor of Newfoundland &c. By Lieu.^t Michael Lane, 1785..., 1787.

Photograph by Allan Dwyer. Image used with permission of TNA.

the first areas to be settled. A map of Fogo Harbour from the 1785 hydrographic survey shows that the extant major fishing concerns were all located in one of three types of locations: on easily-defended points of land, near the single fresh water stream, or adjacent to ebb tide, deep-water anchorages (see Figure 7.1). In addition to the central planter's house, there would soon appear a collection of outbuildings, cookhouses for servants, woodpiles and pens for livestock. Boats at various stages of construction, saw horses, bark pots, rendering vats, bridges, frames for drying furs, komatiks and slides for hauling wood in winter and various other items of borderland industry completed the picture.³⁶ A subsequent generation through birth or marriage usually chose to fish from the father's plantation, adding to the commercial gravity of the location and complicating ownership, but also establishing extended-family claims to the location and enhancing the sense of place. Transient servants, though still a key part of the work system, nevertheless slowly lost their place in the borderland as biological planter families became more established. Harbours became parceled into neighbourhoods where ownership was established through the subsequent construction of work structures and the simple passage of years.³⁷ A legal case in Tilting illustrates this. William Keen Jr. attempted to expropriate the plantation of Irish planter Patrick Murray at Tilting in 1784. Murray fought back with the law, and the action left a small but salient trail of legal documents.

³⁶ Joseph Banks commented in 1766 that English fishing rooms generally had larger numbers of cabins and outbuildings scattered around, whereas the French appeared to consolidate living and working activities into a smaller number of larger structures. See PANL: MG 253.1, Joseph Banks, "Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland...", 32.

³⁷ Robert Mellin has analyzed the expression of labouring norms through vernacular architecture in Tilting, and found that the extended family neighbourhood followed a logic of work, community, and family. See Mellin, *Tilting*, 46-52, 136-153 and 156-181.

In attempting to prove his claim to the premises, Murray explained to the Court of Admiralty that he had constructed over 25 years a fishing room that included three bridges to the mainland, and had employed "20 or 30 men."³⁸ It is noteworthy that his claim to ownership was not based on a bill of sale or legal deed, but rather the fact that he had built up the plantation and its structures over the years. As an established planter, Murray's economic legitimacy and social rank rested in his built environment and his status as an employer of others. Murray appealed to the customs of the fishery as it had evolved to that point, which were that continuous possession of a location and the fabrication of permanent, not seasonal, work structures stood as the basis of legal claims to ownership.

The family, as described in this expanded sense, was a privileged institution in the borderland, insofar as the institution of families aided in the merchants' two prime correlative strategic goals of acquiring relationships and claiming territory. A settled, multigenerational fishing family promised to provide the merchant with a stable production stream. Merchants catered in three ways to the apparently common desire among fishermen to settle down: merchants carried passengers to the region, they stocked their posts with family-friendly goods and consumer items, and they made a place for women in their commercial system. This is not to say that planters were given limitless credit. Merchants moved quickly to seize property when it appeared they were in danger of losing out to an unproductive planter. The case of Richard Waterman of Tilting is

³⁸ The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) Colonial Office (hereafter CO) Series 194/36 f 108-108v, 141-151v, Documents and petitions related to the case of Patrick Murray, 9 February 1786 – 12 October 1786.

instructive in this regard. Even in 1762, the exact period when the post-war rush into the borderland was beginning, Waterman had his facilities at Trinity and Tilting seized for non-payment of debts to Benjamin Lester and others.³⁹ Though the documents do not exist to bear out the speculation that Lester was trying to use Waterman's failure as a way to gain an established foothold in Tilting, it is possible. The Slade ledgers in the 1780s have at least three cases of planters going bust and then reverting to servant status in order to survive, namely John Burt, Sr., Levi Gates, and Samuel Jacobs.⁴⁰ The opposite case, progressing from servant to full planter, was a more common occurrence.⁴¹

Children were a prominent part of the Newfoundland fisheries, both as migratory servants and as the issue of borderland household formation. Children participated in the fishery from the earliest age, and were taught the basics of making fish by their mothers on shore. William Newman reported to the House of Commons that by 1793 the shore work was primarily the preserve of "wives and children."⁴² Boys went to sea early. Nine years of age was the approximate starting point for early trips out on the water to learn the basics.⁴³ It can be assumed that healthy boys who had reached the stage of late

³⁹ PANL: Colonial Secretary's Letterbook, GN2/1/A, vol. 3, f 111.

⁴⁰ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Boxes 1-4, 1783-1792 Ledgers.

⁴¹ The following nine men seem most clearly to have progressed from servant to planter status, according to the Slade Ledgers: John Adams, William Blake, Sr., Thomas Syles, Richard Gale, Sr., John Griffen, John Peckford, John Stoodley, John Welch, and William Wholler. Samuel Jacobs actually progressed from servant to planter and back again, the only such case apparent in the ledgers for the sample period. PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Boxes 1-4, 1783-1792 Ledgers.

⁴² House of Commons, *First Report from the Committee, appointed to enquire into the state of the Trade to Newfoundland*, 26 March 1793, 394.

⁴³ Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (hereafter MUNFLA): MUNFLA ms 81-387 Barbara Girardin, "Mr. Jacob Bishop: as Cook and Former resident of Wesleyville," (unpublished research paper), 14.

childhood where they could contribute to the labour schedule of the family without endangering themselves or others would soon be incorporated into work routines. Only the most protective of borderland mothers could have resisted this. Handcock found that the majority of servants apprenticed into the Newfoundland fishery were teenaged boys, with almost the entire cohort of fishing servants aged under 30.⁴⁴ In the mid 1600s, the traveler and surgeon James Yonge referred to the fishing crews he saw at Newfoundland as “boys” and “striplings.”⁴⁵ One hundred years later, Aaron Thomas noted that the servants he met at Newfoundland in the 1790s were mostly teenaged boys.⁴⁶ There is no evidence pointing to the age structure in the borderland as having been different in a material way from Handcock’s findings for the central part of the English Shore during the same study period. Planter-centred, extended family labouring households in the borderland were likely populated by teenaged boys in numbers that would seem strange to twenty-first century observers. The boys were both direct relatives of the planter-owners of the plantations, either sons or nephews, or indentured servants spending a limited period in the fishery as part of wider labouring lives, as Gordon Handcock so ably demonstrated. French children were taken on as *mousses* (ship’s boys) as young as eight

⁴⁴ Handcock, *Soe longe as there comes noe women*, 148.

⁴⁵ James Yonge, *The Journal of James Yonge, Plymouth Surgeon: 1647-1721*, ed. F.N.L. Poynter (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1963), 57.

⁴⁶ Aaron Thomas, *The Newfoundland Journal of Aaron Thomas, Able Seaman in H.M.S. Boston: a Journal Written During a Voyage from England to Newfoundland and from Newfoundland to England in the Years 1794 and 1795. Addressed to a Friend*, ed. Jean Murray (1795; repr. Don Mills, ON: Longmans, 1968), 58.

years in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but an ordinance in 1670 set the age of twelve as the lower limit.⁴⁷

v. Varieties of Work

In 1767 while on a visit to his Tilting facility, Benjamin Lester visited one of the islands in the small Wadham's chain, near Fogo Island. He recorded in his diary what he learned there:

Rich'd Stacey in Lemons Sloop, from Tilting Harbr about 5 Miles after us, hoist out our Boat & went to y^e third Isle of Wadhams Isle, found [an] old Man and Boy, who liv'd there all the Summer to Kill Birds for Bait, for a Boat that Fish'd on the Next Isle, also for saving the feathers, we went on Shoar, had a Small Hut, he told us that they Knock'd down 2 to 300 Puffins & Turrs on a Day with poles, did not kill any with a Gun be cause that made them wild, could [poach] 200 a Day, which would produce 8 lbs feathers, he gave us 4 Puffins, which was all he had kill'd it being calm, got on board the sloop at 6...⁴⁸

Though the bulk of commodity extraction in the borderland revolved around the seal, salmon and cod trades, there were a variety of other products procured and semi-processed before shipment to Poole or other European commercial centres. Semi-processing refers to the simple preparation of commodities for shipment to a processing facility, at which point the final stages of assembly or craftsmanship are performed. As an example, furs were scraped and dried in Newfoundland, but the transformation of these items into muffs or hats proceeded elsewhere, rarely if ever in Newfoundland.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française*, 1:95. Brière claims that violence and "sadismes" against ship's boys was an accepted part of the culture of the French fishery. See Jean-François Brière, *La pêche française en Amérique du Nord au XVIII^e siècle* (St. Laurent, QC: Editions Fides, 1990), 40.

⁴⁸ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 4 August 1767.

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Journal*, 133.

Feathers, for example, were a considerable source of profit for opportunistic fishers in Newfoundland and Funk Islands in the borderland was a prime location for this, as were the Wadham's Isles.⁵⁰ Lester's diary entry shows he was intrigued with the feather procurement he observed in Notre Dame Bay on a trip to his Tilting facility. His mercantile interest in the grisly work of the old man at Wadhams Isles shines through in his recording of volumes and kill rates, weights and processes. Lester was no naturalist, however. He likely recorded the information so he could review it later with a view to calculating whether he could make a profit at it.

Though there is no evidence Lester dealt in feathers from Notre Dame Bay, Thomas Hancock had mercantile correspondents all over Newfoundland including Fogo, and dealt in considerable volumes of feathers. In the period just before the Seven Years' War, he instructed his Newfoundland captains to go North to the French-English borderland and procure anything of value that they could, including feathers.⁵¹ One of the surviving letters of instruction to one of his Newfoundland captains highlights the opportunistic nature of much of the Newfoundland trade and how the search for financial instruments such as bills of exchange was a constant preoccupation of Atlantic merchants:

we would have you truck our Goods for Skin, feathers, and furs, and [...] you Gitt all the sile skins both dry & Pickled - you

⁵⁰ A friend of Aaron Thomas's was able to gather feathers and eggs from Funk Island with a value of £30, around the year 1790; See Thomas, *Journal*, 127.

⁵¹ Boston Public Library, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts (hereafter BPL): Ch.K.1.1, vol. 1, f 1v, 3v, 8v, 21v, 22v, 30v Thomas Hancock Receipt Book, receipts for feathers, 6 April, 9 September, and 17 September 1782; 17 September 1783; 30 January and 14 February 1784.

are also to Collect our debts and Gitt all our Protest Bills repaid
in anything you can gitt...⁵²

On this particular journey Hancock was only interested that his captain procure seal skins, furs, and feathers in exchange for goods.

While in Poole during the late fall and winter, Benjamin Lester often recorded in his diary the arrival of his ships and those of other Newfoundland merchants. These entries, which often included detailed notes on the cargoes of his ships, provide an excellent snapshot of the types of commodities carried directly to Poole. These Poole-bound cargoes were more diverse than those of ships sent to the Iberian Peninsula, which carried dried codfish almost exclusively. One 1790 cargo, from among many, shows the variety of products carried back to Poole from the Trinity base (see Table 7.1, page 222). We can surmise that much of this product was sourced in the borderland since it was the central location for Lester's procurement of seals and other furs.⁵³ Some items may also have originated in Labrador since by 1790, Lester had operations there. The domestic livestock entries show the degree to which the Newfoundland economy lacked any form of industrial processing. Cows and oxen that died in Newfoundland were skinned, and the hides sent back to Poole for processing.

There were other products that were procured, semi-processed and sent back to Poole from the borderland. Berries were a common item, as previously mentioned. Slade ships often carried semi-processed lumber back to Poole. Planters occasionally

⁵² BLHC: Hancock Papers, Box 10, "Government Instructions, orders to captains of transports, 1741-1748," Folder 1: Boston [1745], Item 7 (loose). Credit notes, bills of exchange and letters of credit should be viewed as commodities since they had a secondary value to traders outside of that to their principal signatories.

⁵³ DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 26 July 1790.

provided wood products to Slade against their purchases at his store, lumbering being a common wintertime activity.⁵⁴ Barrel staves, for example, were rough-cut in the field and then trimmed and assembled at cooperages in distant locations, including Fogo, Tilting, Labrador and Poole.⁵⁵ Though the principal activity of borderland merchants was the procurement and processing of salmon, seals and cod, other activities were woven into the business systems of both the merchant and the resident planters. As the story of the old man and the boy spending the summers in a small hut on little Wadhams Isle indicates, one of the keys to the success of a merchant like Lester was his curiosity about any and all commercial opportunities within the sailing orbit of his principal facilities.

Finally, there was limited internal trade within the borderland. Materials and commodities were transported short distances as part of the fishery and related support operations, such as Benjamin Lester's carrying of a shipload of hay from Tilting to Trinity in the autumn of 1770. In addition, there were instances of exchange within the region. We have already seen how Mary Symes sold fresh beef to Slade in 1788 and 1789.⁵⁶ These ancillary economic activities can be seen as part of an "informal economy" that existed alongside the principal cod, seal and salmon trades. Robert

⁵⁴ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1790-91 Ledger, Account of Basil Osmand. On June 6 of 1790, Osmand delivered 397 hogshead staves and 416 tierce staves with Slade.

⁵⁵ A cooper's shop with resident craftsmen was a feature of most substantial merchant posts throughout the borderland and up into Labrador. See the Slade Battle Harbour Ledger for 1795: PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 6, 1795 Ledger, endmatter. Cartwright always included a cooper as one of the requisite staff members at a sealing or fishing post, see for example Stopp, *The New Labrador Papers*, 159.

⁵⁶ PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, Box 4, 1789 Ledger ff 73, 144.

Sweeny has noted that, though difficult to quantify, this "local and informal" productive activity was an important part of complex structures of work.⁵⁷ Thornton points out that though ancillary activities were uneconomic in themselves, they contributed to a general sense of settlement viability on the boreal seacoast.⁵⁸

vi. Collective Defence and External Threats

When the first English settlers began to survey the region after 1713, they were naturally drawn to the same harbours that the French used, likely for two reasons. First, a good harbour is a good harbour, whether one is a French or English fisher, and will offer access to water, firewood, good anchorages and accessible work spaces ashore. The first settled harbours in Notre Dame Bay were those where a brig could easily enter and exit even at ebb tide thus mitigating the dangers to navigation that had long frightened the English. Second, the best harbours offered opportunities for defence from the human threats of the borderland region: the French and the Beothuk. Though the settlers were funneled into harbours and coves for reasons that initially had to do with the nature of the borderland maritime economy, these littoral population clusters also served well as means of security in the face of outside threats. In the case of the borderland, there were events and conditions which required forms of social organization, usually but not always situational, which required resident leadership.

Though the status of the borderland as an off-and-on venue for hostilities between

⁵⁷ Robert C.H. Sweeny, "Accounting for Change: Understanding Merchant Credit Strategies in Outport Newfoundland," in Candow, *How Deep is the Ocean?* 135, 138.

⁵⁸ Thornton, "The Transition from the Migratory to the Resident Fishery," 110.

Table 7.1

Inbound Poole cargo recorded by Benjamin Lester in 1790

111 Tons Seal Oil	7913 Salted Seal Skins
20 Tons Blubber	247 Dry Seal Skins
246 Beavers	1 Large Seal Skin
132 Otters	9 Cow Skins
87 Foxes	1 Ox Skin
168 Catts (martens)	15 Calves' Skins
5 3/4 Beaver [hides]	

Source: Dorset History Centre: D/LEG Lester Garland Papers, F9 Diary of Benjamin Lester, July 26, 1790.

European empires acted as the basis for forms of military preparation, such events were infrequent. It was the surrounding natural environment which offered ongoing challenges which required social cohesiveness and leadership. The most immediate of such concerns were the Beothuk. For English and Irish servants, planters and artisans, the proximity of the Beothuk was a source of acute fear, as indicated by Jean Conan's poem.⁵⁹ The fact that the Beothuk had chosen not to become trading partners of the Europeans made them unknown and worthy of suspicion. As discussed in Chapter 2, as the decades wore on after initial settlement, the Beothuk appeared to adopt a more coordinated and activist stance toward the interloping White settlers in the borderland. Joseph Banks reported in his 1766 journal that he had been informed that the only place the "Indians" still resided was near Fogo, about four miles inland, and that a "continual state of warfare" reigned between the Beothuk and the English.⁶⁰ In the 1780s, former acts of mischief evolved into acts of resistance: the Beothuk wanted the Whites to leave. The English in the Notre Dame Bay region responded with violence, and a period of extended conflict commenced. In 1783, an Irishman from Tilting was ashore in Gander Bay with a young boy when a Beothuk emerged from the trees with a knife and made threatening gestures before the elder man scared the Native off. In 1792 the same Irishman, named McDonald, fired on a canoe full of Beothuks at Funk Island. A group of English men were attacked by Beothuks in Shoal Bay on Fogo Island in 1787, and Slade client and salmon entrepreneur Thomas Rowsell was killed by the Beothuk in

⁵⁹ Bernard Cabon *et al.*, eds. *Les Aventures de Citoyen Jean Conan de Guingamp: Aventurio ar Citoien Jean Conan a Voengamb* (Morlaix, Fr: Editions Skol Vreizh, 1990).

⁶⁰ PANL: MG 253.1, Joseph Banks, "Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland...", 25.

1789.⁶¹ Benjamin Lester wrote in his diary that in 1792 Beothuk “visited” Tilting where they killed cows and stole fishing gear.⁶² Conan’s poem provides a key piece of supporting evidence for an enhanced period of Beothuk resistance beginning around 1787. He reported in his poem that in 1787 the fishermen of Fogo Harbour were patrolling the town at night with guard dogs, and had declared some type of curfew.⁶³ His observations support the notion that the Europeans in the region were on high alert in the latter part of the 1780s, and had come together as a community to organize means of defence.

It also appears that most organized acts of revenge directed at the Beothuk were instigated by planters. The few testimonies we have about *ad hoc* punitive expeditions against the Beothuk are led by planters, not by, or at the direction of, merchants.⁶⁴ This makes sense: as hopeful permanent residents, the planters had the most to gain from clearing the surrounding country of what they perceived as hostile forces, such as Natives and wolves. Marshall has argued that the crimes against Beothuk were perpetrated by a “lower order” who served as scapegoats for the actions of “employers and merchants.”⁶⁵ The implication is that transient servants perpetrated most of the violence against the Beothuk, at the behest of higher authorities. This is questionable, especially in light of

⁶¹ Ingeborg Marshall, *A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 229; PANL: MG 460, Ledger 1789.

⁶² Memorial University of Newfoundland, Maritime History Archive (hereafter MHA): mha00000249, Diary of Benjamin Lester (typescript), 121.

⁶³ Cabon, *Les Aventures de Citoyen Jean Conan*.

⁶⁴ Marshall has done an admirable job of drawing all the sources together and chronicling the history of Beothuk-European conflict. See “Intensified Conflict between Beothuk and Settlers,” Chapter 7 in Marshall, *Beothuk*, 95-112.

⁶⁵ Marshall, *Beothuk*, 95-112.

the fact that the two most prominent, acknowledged Beothuk killers, salmon-fishing partners John Peyton and Harry Miller, were resident planters.

There were other threats in the environment, beyond the Beothuk, that called for strategies of collective defence and folk leadership. The island of Newfoundland was well populated with a local variant of the timber wolf (*Canis lupus beothucus*) throughout the period under study.⁶⁶ Europeans viewed these animals with particular horror, as they were associated with deep forests and the supernatural. None of the English settlers in the borderland would have had much experience with wolves, as they had been hunted to extinction in England in the medieval period, though they still existed in small numbers in Ireland and parts of Scotland.⁶⁷ Wolves and black bears (*Ursus americanus hamiltoni* in Newfoundland) were the only large natural predators in Newfoundland besides the Beothuk.⁶⁸ In more southerly parts of English North America, colonial authorities offered bounties for wolf skins and cleared swamps around some settlements in order to deny wolves the cover of vegetation.⁶⁹ Some of the burning of forests around Newfoundland settlements might be interpreted similarly as protective clearing. This would have had the added benefit of protecting planters and their families from the

⁶⁶ John E. Maunder, *The Newfoundland Wolf* (1982, repr. St. John's, NL: The Newfoundland Museum, 1991).

⁶⁷ Neal Garnham, "Wolves," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Irish History*, ed. S.J. Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 595.

⁶⁸ Smaller predators at Newfoundland include the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis subsolanus*) and pine marten (*Martes americana atrata*).

⁶⁹ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 132-134.

Beothuk and other unwelcome human visitors.⁷⁰ Newfoundland diarist Aaron Thomas met a “flock of wolves” in the woods near St. John’s while walking with a friend in 1794. Thomas gives the impression that wolves were a constant worry to the residents of Newfoundland as late as the 1790s, and they may have been drawn to settlements in pursuit of cattle.⁷¹ Wolves were part of borderland life: as late as 1792, Benjamin Lester’s cargoes from Trinity into Poole carried wolf skins.⁷²

The French, on both land and sea, were another danger which required coordinated English attention. Migratory Breton and Norman fishers continued to visit Bonavista and Notre Dame Bays throughout the period under study. During the Seven Years’ War, merchants and mayors in several West Country English fishing towns petitioned the Board of Trade in London, demanding that the French not be given special access to Notre Dame Bay at war’s end.⁷³ Wider French losses in North America compelled French authorities to attempt to take back harbours where they had previously fished with success. Greenspond in Bonavista Bay and Twillingate were targeted in this way. Conflicts ensued during the latter 1760s and early 70s, usually with resident English fishermen or servants burning or destroying French fishing rooms or stored gear during the winter.⁷⁴ In 1766, Banks was told that French fishers on the *Petit Nord* went

⁷⁰ W.C. Wilton and C. H. Evans, *Newfoundland Forest Fire History* (St. John’s, NL: Environment Canada, Forestry Service, Newfoundland Forest Research Centre, 1974), 1.

⁷¹ Thomas, *The Newfoundland Journal of Aaron Thomas*, 133.

⁷² DHC: D/LEG/F9, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 25 July 1792.

⁷³ MHA: MHA 17-A-1-027.

⁷⁴ A good example, among many, is the 1775 destruction by English fishermen of processed fish as well as stages and “cabins,” all belonging to the French, in a harbour somewhere near Bonavista. See MHA: MHA 17-A-2-019, which is a typescript of PRO CO 5/138/5b f 21.

out each morning and evening with muskets in their boats, prepared to do battle with the English who had started moving in during the war.⁷⁵ In 1767, Benjamin Lester visited a French fishing room at Gooseberry Island, one of the outer islands of Bonavista Bay, and noted how efficient the French fishers were.⁷⁶ The location of this French fishing room is an indication of how the presence of “enemy” French fishers in among English settlements was a salient feature of borderland life. Settled English, migratory French, and resident Beothuk all apparently made efforts as communities to mediate human dangers. The cultural liminality of the borderland demanded it.

vii. The Tilting Irish

In addition to compelling some people to act in overtly communal ways, borderland conditions also encouraged the formation of new types of communities. Large numbers of Irish migrants moved into and through the borderland, most of them as transient servants, but a small core of them as settlers. These Irish men and women traveled in an Atlantic system which viewed them as dangerous and potentially dissident. In the Anglo-Atlantic world, the Irish would have been reminded constantly of their status as a conquered people. The Naval authorities that governed the Newfoundland fishery in the eighteenth century were concerned throughout the period that the large volumes of Irish “papists” in evidence posed a grave danger to English residents. One commodore at Newfoundland complained about social conditions in Newfoundland thus: “Drunkenness is a Reigning Vice, more especially amongst the Irish Roman Catholick

⁷⁵ PANL: MG 253.1, Joseph Banks, “Journal of a Voyage to Newfoundland...” 20, 22.

⁷⁶ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 30 July 1767.

Servants of which here are a great many more then those of His Majesty's Protestant Subjects, that remain here the winter, by whom many Thefts & Disorders are Committed."⁷⁷ The language spoke volumes about where English officials placed Irish servants in their manufactured social hierarchy: His Majesty's Protestant Subjects on the one hand, Irish Roman Catholick Servants on the other. In 1775 in Conception Bay when Irish planters were seen to have broken the law by openly engaging in Roman Catholic liturgical rituals, the local naval officer ordered that their houses be burned down and not, interestingly, their boats or fishing stages.⁷⁸ There are a number of rulings against Catholics in the Colonial Secretary's Letterbook for that date. As well as the burning of the guilty parties' houses, Terrence Kennedy was fined £10 for "getting married by the Priest," and John Kennedy was fined for simply admitting to being a "Roman Catholic and an Inhabitant of this Island." All of this almost certainly led to a sense of ethnoreligious separateness on the part of those Irish who went to Newfoundland.

Though we have no written letters or diaries from the Notre Dame Bay Irish, we can speculate that they felt their differentness keenly, and perhaps the greatest expression of this sense of Irishness was their act in forming a new, exclusively Irish settlement during the borderland period. In a time and place, Newfoundland, where most European settlements were ethnically mixed between English and Irish, the borderland settlement of Tilting evolved quickly into an exclusively Irish place. That distinct community was able to form because pre-existing, settled borderland cultures had such shallow roots.

⁷⁷ PRO CO 194/10 f 124, Governor Medley to the Lords of Trade, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry, 30 March 1740. There are dozens of similar comments about the Irish in the CO 194 papers in the eighteenth century.

⁷⁸ PANL: GN 2/1/A, Colonial Secretary's Letterbook, ff 260-264, 26 September 1785.

Lester may have carried Irish men and women to the borderland, but the Irish community that formed was their own doing.

The earliest settlers in Tilting had been English planters who moved north from Bonavista, Trinity or other parts of the English Shore.⁷⁹ A toponymic tradition also points to the earliest Tilting settlers being English, since most of the main features in and around the community bear English names, such as Henning's Hill, Chalk's Hill, Dominey's Brook, and Oliver's Cove. Irish place names tended to describe waterfront locations that would change hands and be renamed upon the later arrival and establishment of planter fisheries by Irish families. Examples of this would be Kelly's Island, Murray's Island and Greene's Point.⁸⁰ During the Seven Years' War, when the number of Irish being ushered into the area by Lester was at its peak, there was a dispute between an English planter, William Chalk, and one of his Irish fishing servants, Francis Fleming. Fleming complained that he was paid his wages in dried fish instead of notes, as had been agreed.⁸¹ This likely illuminates the dynamic for the initial peopling of Tilting. Migratory English boatkeepers, as well as established English planters, moved north from Trinity and Bonavista in the late 1740s or 50s, and built fishing premises at Tilting, where they employed Irish servants to work in the boats and on shore. Eventually, some of those Irish chose to settle permanently.

⁷⁹ MHA/KMNF: D-214, Dominee/Dominey Name File; C-142, Chalk Name File.

⁸⁰ Robert Mellin has provided a comprehensive list of Tilting toponymic traditions, many of which see only a local usage. See Robert Mellin, *Tilting: House Launching, Slide Hauling, Potato Trenching and other Tales from a Newfoundland Fishing Village* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003), 40, 54, and 55.

⁸¹ MHA/KMNF: C-142A, William Chalk Name File.

To what degree did religious faith form part of the mental complex of the Tilting Irish? For those Irish who chose to stay, it apparently was important to them that they "take up the chalice" and engage in Roman Catholic liturgies and sacramental practices.⁸² There is evidence that the Tilting Irish practiced their faith in the limited way that was available to them as members of a society where an entire penal code was assembled to prevent this same religious practice. The existence, for example, of an Irish cemetery in Tilting with burials from the late eighteenth century would appear to be evidence that the interment of the dead in consecrated ground was one of the values of the small Roman Catholic society that had formed at Tilting. Evidence that Fogo Island Catholics offered shelter to priests is provided by the death of a priest at Fogo Island in 1787.⁸³ The letters of Newfoundland's first legal priest and eventual bishop, James O'Donel, reveal that by the early 1780s, the Roman Catholic population at Newfoundland were eagerly accepting the services of a variety of priests, some of whom could be classified as rogues. O'Donel's reports to his superior, Bishop Troy of Dublin, imply a long standing thirst on the part of the Irish at Newfoundland for formal vehicles by which to baptize their children and consecrate their marriages, but that British proscriptions on the open practice of religion had caused Roman Catholic practice to become somewhat debased.⁸⁴ For example, lay marriages, known as "handfasting," were accepted under the Council of Trent as being lawful, as were the clandestine baptisms by non-clerics of Roman Catholic

⁸² Psalm 116:13.

⁸³ Archdiocese of Dublin Archives (hereafter ADA): 116/4, 30. James O'Donel to Bishop Troy, Dublin, 10 November 1787.

⁸⁴ Cyril Byrne transcribed a selection of the O'Donel-Troy letters. See: Cyril Byrne, ed., *Gentlemen-Bishops and Faction Fighters: The Letters of Bishops O Donel, Lambert, Scallan, and Other Irish Missionaries* (St. John's, NL: Jespersen Press, 1984).

children. It seems that the Irish in Newfoundland were happy to have fellow Irish fishermen perform these and other liturgical celebrations.⁸⁵ Genealogist Greene reports a tradition that Thomas Burke's "big store" was used as a venue for the celebration Mass.⁸⁶

Official English suspicion of the Irish seems not to have been shared by Benjamin Lester. Though Lester mentioned the Irish dozens of times in his diaries, he never once made a disparaging or suspicious comment about them. He once referred to the Tilting Irish planters as "villains" but this was in the context of a series of commercial transactions in which the Tilting planters drove hard bargains. In addition, it seems the word "villain" was a colloquial term that Lester enjoyed using for anyone who annoyed him. He also referred to Irishman James Broaders as a "scoundrel."⁸⁷ None of these epithets betray any overt bigotry on Lester's part. Still, their religion separated the Irish from the state system in which they traveled and stands as an additional way in which borderland society was socially striated. At a remote level, perhaps only intellectually accessible to a small number of English church officials, the indigenous Irish were also theologically objectionable.⁸⁸

As Tilting evolved into more of a consolidated Irish Atlantic community during the 1770s and 1780s, the social structure of the community began to solidify. Mercantile

⁸⁵ ADA: 116/4, 33, "O'Donel to Troy," 10 November 1787; 116/4, 75, "Troy to Fr. Power" 21 January 1788; 116/4, 76, "Declaration of Bishop Troy regarding Fr. Power," 5 March 1789; 116/4, 78, "O'Donel to Troy," 16 November 1788; 116/5, 21 "O'Donel to Troy," 13 June 1790; 116/5, 24, "O'Donel to Troy," 6 December 1790.

⁸⁶ Greene, *Of Fish and Family*, 23.

⁸⁷ DHC: D/LEG/F3, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 10 June 1770; D/LEG/F10, Diary of Benjamin Lester, 22 August 1798.

⁸⁸ See Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, C. 1714-80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

sources such as the Slade ledgers, in addition to the extant colonial records and the Lester diaries, all point to the formation of an order of settled Irish planters in Tilting in the years following the Seven Years' War. Whereas the previous Irish residents were primarily fishing servants in the employ of English planters, Irish planters began to establish their own fishing operations. Patrick Murray, the Irish planter who attempted with Thomas Burke to withhold his fish from Lester, arrived during the war, around 1761. By 1786 he had a large fishing plantation employing "20 or 30 men."⁸⁹ Murray can be classified as an independent Irish planter, on a par with his English neighbours. Thomas Burke is another example of this type of entrepreneurial Irishman. Burke emerged as the principal Irish planter in the community, having arrived in Tilting early, in 1752, well before the wartime boom in migrants.⁹⁰ This early arrival would also explain Burke's comparatively strong economic status in the years after the war, and the fact that his premises were situated in the prime location beside a fresh water stream and adjacent to prime anchorages in the harbour. In later years his rank was expressed in the form of address the merchant awarded him: "Mr. Thomas Burke."⁹¹ When he died in Tilting in 1811, Burke left an estate valued at £300 sterling.⁹² Burke's accounts with Slade indicate that he traded with them only in sundries, as he operated large ships and carried his fish, seal skins and oil directly to larger transshipment centres such as Trinity

⁸⁹ PRO CO 194/36 f 108, Patrick Murray to the Court of Admiralty (London), "The Memorial of Patrick Murray, Boat Keeper in Tilton Harbor Newfoundland," 3 January 1784.

⁹⁰ PANL: MG 410, Diary of John Burke, Tilting.

⁹¹ As an example, see: PANL: MG 460, Slade Collection, 1782-4 Ledger, ff. 113.

⁹² MHA/KMNF, B-559, Thomas Burke Name File, "Last Will and Testament of Thomas Burke," 5 September 1806.

or St. John's. What prevented Burke from achieving the status of merchant, however, was that he never carried his fish or seals to the European markets; he depended on others for this. A local historian has compiled a list of 26 planters, the majority of whom were Irish, who operated in Tilting during the eighteenth century.⁹³

In addition to the settled, senior planters like Burke and Murray there was an order of transient Irish labourers who moved through the community but did not put down roots. They appear as ghosts in the commercial records; we can sense their presence when a planter like Patrick Murray explains that he employed 30 servants, yet few or none of them settled in Tilting. The records of credit notes in the Slade commercial ledgers reveal surnames that never appear in the cemeteries. They were a mobile Atlantic world proletariat for whom time at Tilting or Fogo was part of a longer journey, a more complex migratory geometry than that of the senior Irish planters who settled, married, and started families.

In the 1750s, alarmed at the growing numbers of Irish in Newfoundland, the British station commodores were instructed to begin recording the numbers of Irish throughout the Island. Even allowing for imperfect statistical collection in the earlier years, it is plain that during the war Lester channeled large numbers of Irish to Tilting and Fogo to settle.⁹⁴ By the period of the Seven Years' War, the Atlantic Irish were beginning to act on a growing set of convictions related to their successes in negotiating

⁹³ Greene, *Of Fish and Family*. Greene commenced his oral history interviews in 1963.

⁹⁴ PRO CO 194/13 f 23, Capt. Drake to the Lords of Trade, Answers to the Heads of Enquiry for 1751, 22 November 1751; PRO CO 194/13 f 197, Governor Dorrill to the Lords of Trade, Report on the state of the Newfoundland fishery for 1755, 22 January 1756; PRO CO 194/14 f 41, Governor Edwards to the Lords of Trade, Scheme of the fishery for 1759, 25 January 1760.

Anglo-Atlantic power and commercial structures. From the early, large migrations to the West Indies in the 1640s and onward, subaltern Irish labourers developed strengths and skills which made them valuable components of British commerce. Tilting was a labouring destination where most Irish came as passengers, but a few people saw it as a borderland place of settlement where they could retain Irish community structures and cultural patterns while working under British economic control and benefiting from British mercantile connections. So, in combination with the mechanical reality of Lester's annual transportation of shiploads of Irish to the region, there may have been an overall sense of Irish differentness that contributed to the unique evolution of Tilting as an important Irish Atlantic settlement, and eventually, parish.

What makes Tilting noteworthy is essentially that which makes the entire Notre Dame Bay borderland worthy of study: it was an unsettled part of the Atlantic world where, initially in small numbers and then in considerable volume after 1763, migrants flowed in and created new communities in a short period of time, whereas most other permanent communities at the Newfoundland fishery had evolved slowly, over a period of two centuries. In July, 1771 a petition of support was submitted to Governor Byron in St. John's from "The Merchants, Traders, and Planters, and Inhabitants of the Harbor of Fogo, Twillingate, and Tiltin, and Fishing Ports adjacent now Assembled & met." The document states in part:

Convinced as we are of the great Advantage that we have already enjoy'd under your Government, & satisfied that you are a faithful servant to the Crown, & an affectionate Friend to our Country, we cannot sufficiently Express that it is our most Ardent Wish, that your Excellency may long continue to Preside over us as a Father to an Industrious People, that we may thereby reap the Blessings of an

Experienced and upright Authority, for the Advancement of His Majesty's services & the Prosperity of the Trade and fishery of this Island...⁹⁵

Though the petition purports to be from the 3 principal communities in Notre Dame Bay and is signed by 28 people, none of the Irish surnames of Tilting planters are in evidence. Indeed there are no Irish names on the petition at all. This is not surprising given the overtly royalist tone to the petition, but it speaks to a probable atmosphere of English-Irish political division, however benign, in the area. The Tilting Irish were in the Anglo-Atlantic but in important ways they felt separate from it.

viii. Credit and Community

As seen in the chapter on John Slade, an important function of the big merchants was to act in a banking capacity. This was distinctly separate from their position as providers of supplies on credit to resident planters, artisans, and indentured servants. Credit extended to a client and recorded in merchant ledgers was a vehicle to assign value against commodities produced, and trade goods consumed by clients in return. A different use of the merchant's reputation was the issuance of bills of exchange.⁹⁶ Exchange bills and notes were themselves commodities in the sense that they were fungible, roughly standardized and met with eager demand in European banking centres. They were sought out both as vehicles to transmit monetary value to distant locations and as investments. Boston merchant Thomas Hancock routinely ordered his Newfoundland

⁹⁵ PRO CO 194/30 f 78-79, Petition to Governor Byron, "The Merchants, Traders, and Planters, and Inhabitants of the Harbor of Fogo, Twillingate, and Tiltin...", 30 July 1771.

⁹⁶ Other terms for these bills of exchange include: commercial bills, commercial notes, credit notes, letters of credit, and letters of exchange.

captains to seek out “good bills” which he could incorporate into his own payments structure or sell on for a profit to another party.⁹⁷ Hancock spent large amounts of time enquiring after bills of exchange, gauging discount rates between various markets, and seeking settlement from bankers or dealers.⁹⁸ He constantly needed his correspondents for information on the rates at which bills were trading. Newspapers in various parts of the British Atlantic system published tables which indicated the discount rates at which bills could be traded in key markets.⁹⁹ Along with ownership of ocean-going ships and correlative commercial relationships in market ports, the ability to issue bills of exchange was the great gulf that separated the merchant from the planter. Bills could also be used to offset balances for supplies in client accounts.

The Atlantic system of standardized credit instruments should be seen as an arm of empire and was as vital an instrument of British expansion as was the navy. The eighteenth-century Newfoundland merchant acted as the local representative and enabler of the British credit system. The system in general facilitated the settlement of the borderland but, ironically in later decades, acted as a brake on wider economic development. Only the merchant could issue bills because it was understood that he had the business infrastructure and assets to make good on these obligations. In borderland society, the merchant’s social place was distinct from all others through his membership in this otherworldly complex of financial trust. A planter or servant’s social rank was in

⁹⁷ BLHC: Hancock Papers, Box 10, Folder 1 Box 10 “Government Instructions, orders to captains of transports, 1741-1748,” item 7, [1745].

⁹⁸ Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS): Thomas Letter Book (microfilm): 1745-1750.

⁹⁹ See for example National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI): *Waterford Herald*, no. 70, 14 July 1791, 4.

part a function of his ability to convince the merchant to use his financial standing to guarantee the issuance of such bills over the planter's signature.

Beyond credit bills a planter or servant who wished to settle a small obligation could easily do so through the merchant's books. This provision of a primitive system of clearing transactions was an important service, and it raised the borderland from a lawless frontier to a region with a semblance of economic order. As we have seen with the laundresses, part of the merchant's role was to smooth the progress of general economic life in order that a collection of other commercial activities, especially those which were important to the progress of the fishery, could be sustained. Credit also aided in community formation. Established planters used their position of trust with the merchant to underwrite small purchases by servants and new arrivals. The procurement of vital fishing supplies as well as small luxuries like clay pipes and tobacco were supported by established community members who allowed their accounts to be debited in the name of a new servant or settler. This small service drew borderland society together and helped transform it from a milieu of mere mercantile commodity extraction to a society with related human networks, interdependencies, and mutual acts of friendly support.

ix. Summary

The resident planters and their wives were the social and economic anchors of borderland society. They were men and women who, for a variety of reasons, chose to reside in Notre Dame Bay and assemble the capital required for success in one or several of the extractive enterprises available there. Planters formed families, had children, and sponsored the work of servants through the provision of employment and credit. In the

first years of European involvement, in the period after 1713, planter life in the borderland was inconstant and unstable. Some planters moved to the Bay and settled, seeking to make a go of life in the seal, salmon or cod fisheries or as fur trappers. Others resided for shorter periods in the area as part of longer-term movements. After 1763, with greater volumes of migrants coming to the Bay, planters solidified their central place as important resident social and economic actors alongside the two dominant merchants. However, planter status remained fluid. A man could arrive in the borderland as a servant, and through luck and hard work, stay there after his term of indenture was complete and install himself in his own fishing operation. Or a man might die and leave the operation to his planter-wife. Another occupational progression was that from artisan to planter. Skilled artisans and other providers of vital services were usually brought to the borderland under the auspices of one or another of the merchants in the region. Once term of service as a cooper or ship's mate was complete, some artisans chose to stay at Newfoundland and engage in the fishing trades. This type of cross-occupational mobility is hard to discern from existing primary sources, but through creative use of mercantile records, the faint traces of such occupational narratives can be revealed.

The status of the region as a commercial and cultural borderland informed the processes by which communities were formed, and the ultimate complexion of those communities. New economic opportunities were present in the form of different species, in different volumes, but these species imposed new rhythms of work and planters and merchants adapted their labour calendars to take advantage of this. As a newly constituted venue for English settlement, the better harbours of the region saw rapid

population inflows, both directed (by merchants) and non-directed. At Tilting, a unique Irish Atlantic society formed rapidly in the years after 1763 driven by merchant-sponsored population increases and an ethno-religious identity that was tempered by longstanding British structures of control and official distrust of the Irish. Yet borderland social change could be expressed in a community's disappearance as well, as in the cases of French summer fishers and, tragically, the Beothuk. The proximity to English settlements of human dangers in the form of armed French fishers and Beothuk Natives also drew settlers together into modes of protection and defence, when necessary. At the same time, French fishing ports just outside the borderland offered opportunities for escape for those English men who needed, or wanted, to run away.

In a cashless society, the merchant offered services which, on the surface, appear as friendly conveniences but were in fact vital to the process of community formation. Newly-arrived settlers and servants could acquire supplies by drawing on the credit and trust of established planters. The case of Mary Symes gives insights into the productive role of women in the borderland and the place of credit in facilitating women's labour. The commercial presence of women was mostly in support of, or in conjunction with, the planter fishery and servant employees, but there were cases of women striking out on their own too. John Slade welcomed women into his edifice of credit and trust by allowing payments for the vital services they provided to be cleared through his ledgers. It marked a public recognition of some women's economic value. Much of women's labour was monetized in the same way as men's and the smooth progress of merchant capital was ensured.

Chapter Eight

Borderland, Heartland, Homeland: Conclusions

i. Introduction

This dissertation has synthesized information from a number of disciplines with a view to illustrating that the borderlands perspective can be an illuminating way of analyzing the settlement, by Europeans, of many Native homelands in the Atlantic world. Though not all colonial communities satisfied the conditions presented in this dissertation for classification as a borderland, namely liminality, accelerated change and environmental boundedness, those that did might all from being analyzed in this light. It has been argued tacitly in this work that to get the full, rich picture of economic and social growth and change in areas which often happen to be distinct bioregions, perspectives from a number of scholarly disciplines should be welcomed. A borderland is both an event and a place, or rather a collection of linked places. It is much easier to define the spatial limits of a given borderland than the temporal ones. In the case of Notre Dame Bay, the region began to see competitive economic activity in the earliest months after Europeans discovered their New World. Later, as the English settled in one part of Newfoundland and the French persisted in a seasonal fishery in a neighbouring region, the Bay emerged as an interface between empires and a frontier between European and Native civilizations.

It was not a coincidence that the Beothuk happened to reside in this site of French-English competition. Part of the reason for its persistent liminality, for its being

the last stretch of the Newfoundland coast to be aggregated into the Anglo-Atlantic, was the very presence of the purportedly dangerous “Indians” who resided there. The Beothuk thrived in the islands and estuaries of this fractured geography, the very same islands that so scared European navigators. Finally, there is ample evidence that the two major European empires that peered at each other across the Bay feared the European competitor that they saw through the fog. All of this ensured that the Bay would long remain a zone of fleeting summer visits and surreptitious exploratory expeditions. Both French and English treated Notre Dame Bay as a known but peripheral economic locale until the eighteenth century, when external pressures persuaded them to move in. For the English, the pressure was crowding along the old English shore. For the French, serial military and diplomatic challenges in the eighteenth century eventually compelled them to make a calculated gesture of ownership.

ii. Addressing the Borderland

During the winter of 1829 in St. John’s, Shanawdithit drew some diagrams of various aspects of her culture. One of the images shows an item that William Epps Cormack interpreted as a Beothuk spiritual totem (see Figure 8.1). It is a two-masted fishing boat, doubtlessly European in design, drawn with close attention to proportion and detail. The drawing raises fascinating questions of how the Beothuk viewed European fishermen and their gear and watercraft. The hybrid Native-European totem also highlights the sense in which Notre Dame Bay was perhaps a borderland in the minds of the Beothuk people, as much as it was for early-modern fishers. If Cormack was right, and the item is a religious artifact of some sort, it indicates that the Beothuk

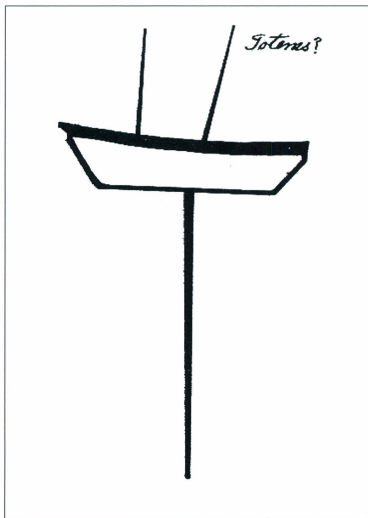


Figure 8.1 Beothuk boat totem

Source: James P. Howley, *The Beothucks or Red Indians: The Aboriginal Inhabitants of Newfoundland* (1915; repr., Toronto: Prospero Books, 2000), plate between pages 248 and 249.

had begun to incorporate elements of the European world into the imagery of their spiritual complex. Accelerated change occurred in the borderland on many different levels and that change was hosted in all of the cultures who lived in or visited the region.

There are a number of characteristics of the joint Native and European experience in the Notre Dame Bay borderland in the period from 1713 to 1802 that render it a noteworthy Atlantic episode. The use of the borderland construct helps to highlight the degree to which European settlement in Notre Dame Bay was an important story on several levels: the unique response of the Beothuk to alien systems of economic organization, the economic implications of the boreal seacoast environment, the spontaneous formation of an Irish parish, numerous incidents of mercantile innovation, and the expression of French-English power choreographies in a contested land- and seascape. Approached by way of the context of Atlantic history, the borderland perspective offers a way to parse individual regional histories around the Atlantic region while maintaining reference to wider imperial, environmental and economic contexts. The borderland construct thus has a wider applicability.

Rivers and estuaries, lakes and stretches of ocean can and should be incorporated into the defining constitution of a given borderland because there is less of an ecological separation between the realms of land and sea than historians have traditionally assumed. In addition, Native peoples of Atlantic Canada tended to move easily between land and water, a fact which enhances the value of viewing borderlands in terms of bioregions. The mutual effects of land and sea on regional climate and life forms therefore dictate

that when necessary, the definition of a borderland include the watery realms was well as the landward ones.

A borderland is defined by the presence of one or more groups of indigenous peoples. They may migrate in and out of the bioregion over time. In their closeness to land, river and sea, they were closely woven into the environment of the region in question. Their measured use of land and resources sets up a latent dichotomy for comparison with Europeans at later stages of analysis. Natives chose to live in given areas, or colonize others, based on the availability of resources and the interlinked environmental web of weather, seasons and proximity to important spirits. Their homelands could be widely distributed, but the Atlantic borderlands that some chose to inhabit answered key ecological, economic and spiritual needs.

As well as being liminal, environmentally bounded geographic zones, borderlands were also periods of time during which European powers competed with one another, and when Europeans as a civilization presented a combined challenge to resident indigenous groups. They were sites of innovation and accelerated change. Native peoples adopted aspects of new European material culture, and as European culture in general proved unequal to the task of colonization in the New World, Europeans borrowed heavily from the Native cultures that surrounded them. Just as indigenous peoples chose to change elements of their economic and spiritual culture in the face of European challenges and opportunities, so were Europeans compelled to adapt in the face of new environmental and climatic realities. For Native peoples, famine and contagion were the most formidable and ultimately destructive challenges they faced. Borderlands appear at times

to be laboratories of material and cultural innovation and experimentation.

Paradoxically, due to both their politically and economically unsettled nature and the related absence of hegemonic pressures, borderlands were also zones where some human groups were able to access the Atlantic economy while retaining a measure of cultural distinctiveness. In Notre Dame Bay, this was the experience of both the Beothuk and the Tilting Irish.

iii. The End of the Notre Dame Bay Borderland

When Benjamin Lester died in 1802, the Notre Dame Bay borderland event was at its end. Competing French and English claims had been resolved in 1783 with the removal of French rights to the area. The Beothuk population was dwindling and perhaps only a single, composite band remained. John Slade was long dead, and the system of supplying resident planters that he pioneered in the region was taking on a distinctly more exploitative and industrial tone. All viable harbours had been identified, named and occupied by English and Irish settlers. The installation of British institutions signaled an end to the period of contested imperial sovereignty. The British backed up their interpretation of the Utrecht and Paris treaties with a system of fishing admirals, naval officers, and patrols. French appeals to the law, and to fairness, were ultimately unequal to the English imperative to clear the region of Natives and other contestants, to settle, and to then move on to other, more distant commercial orbits. By 1802, second and third generations of English and Irish children were being born in Notre Dame Bay; they knew no other homeland than this stretch of boreal coast. They were Newfoundlanders.

It is important that the borderland event not be viewed as an isolated island in time. The borderland prefigured much of Canada's and the Atlantic world's subsequent history. The events that are revealed in the borderland were in many cases continuations of trends that perhaps become more distinct when viewed in the long term. In the decline of the Beothuk we see the destruction of the latest of several indigenous peoples who tried, and failed, over a period of several thousand years to live at Newfoundland with its precarious food chain and punishing winters. There is much that is hauntingly familiar in Beothuk acts of resistance to English settlement in their heartland. In the arrival of French and English fishers, both operating within distinctly post-feudal, directed industrial organizational frameworks, we see an episode in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. In the movement of shiploads of Irish men and women, the familiar specter of inveterate human migration is visible. The long advance from antiquity to modernity is apparent in the consumer goods that pre-occupied the women of Tilting. The Tilting Irish, with their itinerant priests and religious world view represent, along with the *habitants* of New France and *habitants-pêcheurs* of Île Royale, the continued march of an ancient variant of Rome-centred Christianity, including a devotion to Our Lady that is invoked in the very name of the bay under study, Notre Dame.

Perhaps the end of the Notre Dame Bay borderland should be marked not with the death of Benjamin Lester in 1802, but rather by the birth of the Beothuk girl, Shanawdithit, circa 1801. She was born into a distinctly Atlantic world, though as a child she may never have seen the sea. The progress of her life would probably have been judged outlandish by earlier generations of Beothuk. She traveled from the borderland to

St. John's twice by boat and spent a large part of her adult life in the presence of Europeans. The manner of her death and delivery to the next world was ghoulish by Beothuk standards as well. She was buried beside a cart path in St. John's, her head removed and sent to London for study and storage.

The end came for Shanawdithit when the borderland ceased to exist for her and her remaining family as the bounded centre of their economy and culture. Just as change had come to borderland ways when the French fishers stopped coming, or when the Tilting Irish integrated themselves into Anglo-Atlantic structures of commerce and culture, so did the borderland cease, eventually, to sustain its original and longest-lived inhabitants. For the Beothuk, the end of the borderland was experienced as a collapse of families, of hunting, gathering and fishing regimes, and of systems of spirituality and cosmology. If there was a Beothuk borderland florescence, as Ralph Pastore astutely proposed, it was all too brief. It ended with the incorporation of the borderland into the British Empire.

Appendix One

Glossary of Newfoundland English Terms

Source: G.M., Story, W.J. Kirwin, and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds., *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

Definitions from the *Dictionary* have been paraphrased.

Aback	After or behind.
Agent	The business manager for a merchant house at a given harbour or fishing post.
Bark pot	A large iron cauldron in which nets and ropes are preserved by boiling them in a solution of spruce or fir bark and buds.
Berth ¹	A particular station on the fishing grounds.
Berth ²	A place on board a boat; a job.
Bridge	A wooden gangway connecting waterfront structures to the shore and to each other; the wooden platform at the entrance to a house.
Bye-boat	Also by-boat. A fishing craft, undecked, kept at Newfoundland and operated by migratory fishermen.
Caplin	<i>Mallotus villosus</i> . A small, iridescent deep-water fish, preyed upon by cod.
Diet	Wages and board for a fishing servant or shareman, as in "winter's diet."
Droke	A thick or distinctive cluster of trees.
Flake	A platform constructed with poles and spread with conifer boughs, for drying cod fish.

Gunning	The act of shooting sea birds for food from a boat or from shore.
Hard bread	Kiln-dried wheaten biscuit; ship biscuit.
Hogshead	A large cask for transporting liquid, approximately 250 litres in volume.
Hove	Past tense of heave; viz. to slowly approach or sail into; to approach shore.
Komatik	From the Inuktitut; A long sledge used in northern Newfoundland as well as Labrador for hauling wood in winter; a slide.
Landwash	The seashore where a fishing premises is located; the area between high and low tide; the part of the shore washed by the sea.
Lassy	Slang, a corruption of "molasses."
Livvyer	Also livyer. A permanent settler; one of a small number of settlers in an isolated seacoast location.
Making fish	The act of processing fresh cod into lightly salted and wind-dried saltfish.
Premises	The waterfront property, both land and structures, of a merchant or a planter. Implies both a residential as well as a productive capacity.
Punt	An undecked boat up to twenty-five feet in length, round-bottomed and keeled, propelled by oars and sometimes with a small sail.
Room	A waterfront tract of land from which a fishing operation is conducted.
Run	A narrow salt water strait or passage between islands.
Sack	Also sack ship. A cargo ship carrying supplies to, and fish from, Newfoundland.
Saltfish	Wind-dried and lightly salted cod fish; the product of the Newfoundland cod fishery.
Ship	To engage for work in the fishery or on board a ship.
Sile	Also swile; Seal.
Skiff	Also skift; A large, partly decked fishing boat, larger than a punt. Operated by oars and a sail.

Slide	A sled with wooden runners curved in front, used in winter for transporting wood.
Stage	An elevated, roofed structure on shore, with tables for processing cod fish.
Store	A shed or structure for the storage of goods or tools.
Tickle	A narrow salt-water strait.
Tilt	A small wooden shelter or cabin, temporary in nature.
Tierce	A large cask, approximately 160 litres in volume.
Trade	The collection of all firms engaged in a merchant business.
Trader	A ship engaged in coastal or trans-Atlantic commerce.
Youngster	An inexperienced man or boy working in the fisheries.

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